



The Gender Benders

A Look at the
Trends Distorting
the Roles of
Men and Women

by David Egner

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Introduction

Men and women are confronted today by a society undergoing profound change—but especially the women. In every compartment of their lives they are faced with new role models, liberalized attitudes, and strong social and psychological pressures. Economic tensions, employment demands, radical views of the family, spinoffs from the human rights movement, and a host of other cultural factors are bombarding men and women from every side.

Even the church is feeling the impact. The Christian feminist movement, rather than seeing the improved status of women as a result of the permeation of the gospel, has pointed fingers of accusation at the church. They see it as a deterrent to the true liberation of women. Traditional biblical concepts of marriage, equality, authority, and even ordination are being challenged, causing widespread turmoil.

Christian women and men are being thrown into confusion over their roles in this liberalized, contemporary society. They wonder, must the church keep up with the times? Have the relevant bibli-

cal passages been properly interpreted? Has the time finally come for a "new hermeneutic"? Does the Word of God really tell men and women how to be happy in this bright new age?

My firm conviction is that happiness and true liberation are offered to men and women who will study the Bible and submit to its profile. Its concise teaching cuts through the jumble of contemporary forces and ideas and gives us a dignified, satisfying self-concept. It leads us to become the men and women God wants us to be.

In this book, therefore, we will work toward achieving the "liberation" of applied biblical truth. We will do so by examining critically the powerful forces that are currently distorting the biblical roles of men and women in the home, church, and society. We will look closely at the key scriptural passages, using established principles of interpretation. And we will try, on a practical, understandable level, to re-create the biblical profile of men and women, which every believer cannot only identify with but also be proud of.

PART I

Distorting Forces in Contemporary Society

1

Adrift in a Changing World

Woman's role in society has always fluctuated with the passing of the centuries, but nothing can compare with the dramatic changes of the past 120 years. What began as a slow, steady movement has snowballed into full throttle proportions since the beginning of World War II. Today's woman, breathless by the changes going on around her, barely stops to evaluate each new "victory" that comes along before pursuing another.

But for many thinking women and men, especially those who believe in the Bible and follow Christ, the changes are frightening and threatening. With

things happening so fast, shifting first one direction then another, they feel like they're floating—cut adrift. And in truth they are. The traditional responsibilities and relationships of masculine and feminine roles have been swept away, and with them the time-honored sources of meaning and fulfillment for men and women. As time goes on, the elements replacing them have proven to be disappointing and less than satisfying.

Consider, for example, the movement of women into the higher echelons of the work force. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, it has brought with it an alarming increase in problems. Health officials say that now one of every three problem drinkers is a woman, compared with one in six only 12 short years ago. In addition, a growing number of women are smoking—often an expression of emotional tension. Heart disease has increased alarmingly among the feminine gender. The suicide rate for women continues to rise. And the involvement of women in property crimes such as fraud, embezzlement, and forgery has doubled since 1970.

Yes, as Richard De Haan wrote, "All is not well in liberation land." As it turns out, women are not as much in control of their own destinies as some have dreamed. Strong forces are at work in our society, some under the banner of re-

ligion, forcing them in directions they do not wish to go, and leading to consequences that are both dissatisfying and destroying. A kind of "sexual suicide" is taking place, turning the "liberated" woman into a dehumanized, unhappy clone in a life devoid of meaning and purpose.

ANCIENT HISTORY

In primitive societies, the woman cared for the children and stayed near the home. Hers was always a life of hard work—often far more difficult than her husband's. He foraged for food, he fought the wars, he defended the homeland, he sacrificed to the gods, while she fulfilled the wife/mother responsibilities. In general, she played only a minor role, if any, in government and the community.

In Greek society, however, the woman experienced a limited emancipation. She could be involved in cultural pursuits—writing, science, and the arts. Important to the development of Greece was the limitation of family size, freeing the woman to be involved in other activities. Nevertheless, even when Athens was at its zenith, the wife stayed almost exclusively within her own house. But she was in charge there, whether she actually did the work or had the money to hire it done. She usually stayed at the back of the house, seldom entering the

front or going into the street except to fulfill her household duties. Except for the prostitutes (some of whom amassed great wealth and exerted powerful political influence), women lived a life of relative seclusion.

Things were different in Rome. As the empire grew strong, then waned, the woman acquired more and more liberty. She could own property, assist in government, and go anywhere in public. (There are even passages that tell of women combatants in the Colosseum.) As anarchy increased, she became still more free.

For the most part, however, the Roman woman was the very heart and strength of the empire. She stayed at home, even though she had more freedom than her Greek counterparts, and tended to the family needs. She kept the house in order, she cared for the children, and she was loyal to her husband.

THE MIDDLE AGES

All of this changed with the coming of the middle ages. Most people were peasants, and theirs was a hard lot. Christianity had elevated the woman morally, but she had little chance for education or financial independence. For the intelligent, the convent offered the best opportunity for enlightenment. But for most women, life was a dismal drudgery.

At the coming of the renaissance, with

its rediscovery of the classics and its cultural progress, the woman's lot began to improve. Better growing and harvesting techniques gave people more time. A healthier diet meant increased strength, and her world began to open up. Those who could read discovered the classics. The Reformation gave her the Bible and brought her the benefits of the rising tide of nationalism. Nevertheless, it was still *a man's world*.

When the age of reason came, it marked the beginning of the education of women apart from the nunnery or her husband's private instruction. England took the lead in establishing public schools, and in colonial America "dame" schools were established. By the early 1800s, women and men were attending the same high schools and colleges.

Woman was still limited, however, by the laws of the land. She was discriminated against by the court system and she could not own property. She was excluded from the voting process. She was victimized by a glaring double standard in sex and marital fidelity. And she had no say about whom she would marry. Who knows how much physical abuse the woman suffered, with absolutely no recourse open to her?

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

With the coming of the industrial rev-

olution, rapid changes began. She could work at factories, and this got her outside the home. The rise of cities took her off the farm, with its endless round of milking, planting, and harvesting. Money began to increase, bringing new potentials for change in female status.

Although Plato's *Republic* had called for complete equality between men and women, this remained an elusive ideal (even in Plato's day). Nevertheless, more and more women were receiving a good education. Then a movement began in England to give women the right to own property, and the goal was achieved in 1870. France, the United States, and other countries soon followed suit, paving the way for even more dramatic changes.

About this time, Susan B. Anthony and others were involved in a struggle with state and federal governments in several areas: to give women the right to control their own earnings, to improve their working conditions, to give them guardianship over their dependent children, to let them inherit property, to allow them to serve as witnesses in court, and to give them the right to vote. Between 1840 and 1860, most states passed laws granting women rights over their own earnings. The Civil War in America brought improvements in labor laws. But with the passing of the Four-

teenth and Fifteenth Amendments, a great disappointment came to women. The status of equality was granted to blacks, but equal protection was not given to women and children. And the right to vote would remain elusive for another half-century.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The "woman" issue focused upon suffrage in the early twentieth century. Efforts continued without avail until Alice Paul decided to lead in more drastic tactics. In January 1913, the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, she organized a march of 5,000 women in Washington. When they were brutally attacked by an angry mob, public sympathy swung in their favor. The Democrats in power, however, did not act.

But the state of Montana responded not only allowing women to vote but even electing a woman to the state legislature. Several states followed Montana's lead, and in 1918 Woodrow Wilson publicly supported the suffrage movement. The bill was passed in the House but missed in the Senate by one vote. Shortly afterward it was fully ratified, and women voted for the first time in a national election in 1920.

Now the express was rolling. Women continued to make progress in other areas. The United States had become a

super power, and its economy was growing to world-leading proportions. Society changed rapidly with the advances in industry, science, and technology. More and more women were achieving a college education and entering the labor force. But they were seldom considered for executive positions.

The movement toward women's freedom received a setback during the Great Depression, when jobs were scarce. But World War II created a new women's work force. With the men off to war, women moved into the factories, college teaching positions, and offices in greater numbers than ever before. "Rosie the Riveter" worked long hours, breaking free from the kitchen once-and-for-all. Out of necessity, women showed that they could be counted upon to fill the need for doctors, dentists, college professors, technicians, and skilled and unskilled laborers. When her man came "marching home again," more often than not she stayed at work because she enjoyed it, and to allow her and her husband to escape the doldrums of depression standards of living.

ECONOMIC PRESSURES

Following the war, America rebuilt rapidly. Most families had been able to purchase very little since the early days of the depression. Now, many advances

had been made in automobiles, appliances, furniture, and electronics, and a great marketplace had opened up. Husbands and wives were willing to work hard to acquire the luxuries of the post-war age.

Meanwhile, the woman who stayed at home became dissatisfied. Because of modern conveniences, she did not have to work hard or long to maintain the household. She no longer needed to be as skilled or creative; the machines did it all. She was not needed in the same way as her grandmother was, nor could she find the same personal fulfillment. As education levels rose, she was increasingly dissatisfied by the humdrum of her home life. The pattern established by her grandmother and mother just did not fit her. She had been cut adrift, and she is still grappling to find a new means of achieving meaning and purpose.

On the professional front, the sixties and seventies were equally unsettling. College-trained women found top jobs closed to them. Hardened attitudes could not be legislated away by the Congress. For the woman to achieve the equality she desired, all of society would have to change. Radical views of masculinity and femininity, childbearing, and employment potentials would have to be promoted if she were to make additional gains.

She learned new tactics at the anti-war rallies of the seventies. By now, society was changing rapidly. A progressive mood prevailed and liberal politicians ruled the Congress. The National Commission on the Status of Women, established by John F. Kennedy in 1961, became the catalyst for change. Conservative, moderate, and extreme women's groups came together for a united push against all forms of discrimination, especially in areas of employment. They banded together in a group called NOW (National Organization of Women) and elected Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, as their first president. Her graphic representation of the "trapped" middle-class woman, who was tied down by her home chores, children, and husband's wishes, rallied the divergent groups into a concerted effort.

Even though the Equal Rights Amendment has not been ratified, dramatic changes have occurred. There are more women lawyers, corporation directors, doctors, legislators, and college presidents than ever before. Legislation has been passed removing discrimination in nearly every area of life. The bookstores have been filled with publications extolling the virtues of an equalized society. And a host of magazines written especially for the liberated woman have appeared on newstands everywhere.

SOME SOBERING THOUGHTS

In achieving these major objectives, however, some elements of great value have been lost. All too often, those working the hardest for social or legislative changes have not looked ahead to the consequences of their gains. Little or no attention has been paid to the biblical directives regarding the roles of men and women. Truly, modern woman has been "cut adrift."

Which direction will she go? Already women are learning what men have known all along; that a certain titled position or professional acceptance does not automatically bring inner peace or personal happiness. They're also discovering new dimensions of stress—factors they were long protected from by their hard-working husbands. And they're paying the price for working valiantly to establish a set of relationships not sanctioned in God's holy Word.

The Christian woman today, striving to honor God and submit to His authority, is in the best position of all to find personal satisfaction in our turbulent world. She'll hear the cry of the feminist voices, but she'll evaluate them by God's Word. She'll hear the call for full equality, for the ordination of women, for the exercise of her full rights, but she'll measure them by her one true authority—the Bible. She'll evaluate her own

femininity in the light of God's view of her creation, her role in the home, and her place in the church. And she'll reject every contemporary force that would distort her God-given role, realizing that it would only produce dissatisfaction and cripple her ideal relationships in the home, church, and society.

2

Conflicting Views of the Self

Do your own thing!
Watch out for number one!
I have a right to be happy!
You only go around once!
Let yourself go!

These familiar catch-phrases summarize one of the most powerful forces at work upon today's man and woman—the extreme views of the self that are being adopted and promoted by our contemporary culture. Preoccupation with the self has sometimes taken on cultic proportions in certain segments of our society. Younger people—males in their twenties and a growing number of females—are bowing at the altar of the self.

This new individualism is built upon the premise that the self is the center of all being. It's obsessed with finding new ways to determine the dimensions of self, to identify new "needs," and to satisfy those needs. The advertising world, the media, and the publishers are taking advantage of it to peddle a variety of vanity products of every description.

The entertainment world too is promoting the adulation of the self. Perhaps it all began with the slogan of rock festivals and anti-war rallies of the late sixties and early seventies. "Do your own thing," young people were encouraged. If you don't want to fight in Vietnam, don't go. If you want to smoke pot, go ahead. If you want to smash a professor's car with a sledgehammer, more power to you. The only thing that's important is that you "do your own thing."

This phenomenon has expressed itself in a number of intriguing ways. In painting, for example, the traditional concepts of design, color, balance, and form were cast aside. The most popular music was the most extreme and agonized, such as that of the "soul" singers Janis Joplin and the "Grateful Dead." Movie and television heroes were rebels—cops who went outside the law to catch criminals, or social misfits who somehow got the upper hand. Irreverent, prejudiced anti-heroes such as Archie Bunker or the de-

tective Columbo captured the fancies of a broad audience by exhibiting a dogged independence and disrespect of convention. Long hair, hippie beads, freak-outs, rock festivals—these were the symbols of a whole generation saying no to their culture and carving out their own course.

Today the worship of the self is sophisticated, low-key, and masked with an attractive veneer of respectability. But the self is worshiped just the same. The accepted code is an ethic of indulgence. No one denies himself anything anymore. It's as if intelligent, educated people are saying in all seriousness, "I have a duty to please my self," and believing it. In the quest for personal satisfaction, nothing is denied.

A unique justification is presented in the use of the term "needs." Young women are told they have "needs" for self-expression, for a rewarding career, for an independent lifestyle. Young men have "needs" to be satisfied by a creative job, a variety of female companions, a surrogate father role, and a carefully selected assemblage of things—sports cars, clothes, yachts, bachelor pads, the right accessories to promote their masculine image.

A great deal of introspection is centered upon determining what these "needs" of the self are. The assumption is that society should step aside and

make room to meet those needs. Self-image needs, social needs, sexual needs, physical needs, emotional needs—all are lined up like slots in an empty egg carton, demanding to be filled one-by-one. When the job no longer satisfies, move on. When the marital partner doesn't meet the needs, other recourses are shamelessly explored. The "in" statement is, "Don't ask questions about what the other is doing."

But it's all a semantic hoax. What they classify and interpret as legitimate needs are in actuality selfish, lustful desires. Under a "cover" of social and psychological sophistication (tragically, encouraged by a greedy marketing world), people are caught up in an endless cycle of self-gratification. Like the Greek god Narcissus, they spend endless hours gazing lovingly at themselves. And they waste the bounty of an affluent age upon silly creature comforts, oblivious to their longings, both from outside themselves and within, for a mature, meaningful, satisfying network of relationships.

Those outside this egocentric square are sometimes inclined to feel cheated—men and women who love their mates, cherish their families, and know the meaning of deferred gratification. The if-you-want-it-get-it philosophy has a certain dramatic appeal. So does the phrase

so often used by the Madison Avenue hucksters of materialistic pleasure, "You owe it to yourself."

Yes, sometimes the ordinary Christian gets the idea that the best of life is somehow passing him by. "Maybe they're right," he says to himself. "Look at all I've been missing!" When that kind of thinking begins, the next step is automatic. First little desires are gratified, then larger ones. Before long, every conceivable yearning is satisfied, regardless of the consequences. Homes are broken. Businesses lost. Friends taken advantage of. Reputations ruined. Children damaged for life.

Ours is indeed a selfish age. The concept of individualism has long been part of the American dream, but put into the hands of high-powered promoters, peddlers of trash, and proponents of self-adulation, it becomes a narcissistic nightmare. The more sophisticated and attractive the wrappings, the more dangerous the contents. How important, then, that God's people know firmly who they are. That they are able to identify their true needs. And how essential that they test every new idea and allurements by the measuring rod of God's Word, lest they too become servants of the self.

NONCOMMITMENT

Linked directly with an improper view

of the self is a growing trend toward non-commitment. No longer do we see people pledging themselves, committing themselves wholeheartedly to anything—except themselves. It's an age of holding back, of self-protection, of leaving yourself a back door out.

In some senses, this holding part of the self in reserve is understandable. It's risky, after all, to commit yourself to anything or anyone. Look at how many in this world are hurting. They're victims of the selfish ones. Let's make sure it doesn't happen to us. The flipside of self-centeredness is often a profound cruelty. Loyal mates and devoted children become thoughtless casualties of those who serve the desires of the self.

"Do it now," it's said. "The only important day is today. Things change." "Tomorrow will bring a new set of desires, and a new cadre of people and things to meet those desires." "Take all you can now, and don't get in too deep. Protect yourself. Leave a way out."

Perhaps the most telling indicator of the prevalence of this generation of non-commitment is the divorce rate. "Till death do us part," they vowed. But those were just words to satisfy the preacher. What they really meant was, "Till someone better comes along." On the surface there was a commitment, true. But they kept back their hearts for them-

selves. Like paper cups and McDonald wrappers, their companions were "throw-aways." Bio-degradable. Fit for recycling.

Perhaps we learned it in the Vietnam war. Total commitment to the American ideal meant endless suffering in a meaningless struggle. We sent "throwaways" over there to waste their lives upon an empty cause. At least that's what the anti-war protesters and spokesmen of the New Left said. And it sounded so right. After all, even the ones who went with the best of motives were despised for going.

Our current age has much to offer. An endless array of material goods and glamorized experiences give the promise of supreme self-gratification. So we don't totally commit ourselves to anything. We hold back, always searching for the ultimate experience.

This produces a driving restlessness—a perpetual experimentation. We move from one source of pleasure to another. Every week, fresh publications tell us new ways to pamper ourselves, to make ourselves feel better or look better, to make life easier, or to achieve the highest ecstasy. Again and again we're told that our inhibition, our unwillingness to "let ourselves go," is keeping us from enjoying the supreme human experience.

So we keep trying to slake the thirst. On the materialistic level, we aren't happy until we purchase the product we "just can't do without." We gullibly believe the high-powered ads that tell us the acquisition of this product will bring us ultimate happiness. As a result, we mortgage our entire future in a desperate attempt to be happy in the present. But in the end, by neglecting the true and the spiritual, the driving thirst consumes us.

This I've-got-to-have-it thinking always threatens a marriage. Sometimes both husband and wife define happiness in totally materialistic terms. So they embark upon a frantic mission to acquire. But as the bank accounts multiply, their spirits go bankrupt. Each new acquisition, which they stand back and admire with such pleasure, takes them one step further from the true source of genuine happiness. You see, the soul too must be fed. The marriage itself must be nourished. Faithfulness, love, contentment, loyalty, peace—these are the elements that produce a love that lasts when earning power is gone and physical attractiveness has faded.

It's often one partner of the marriage who gradually begins to give in to the restless urge—the narcissism fostered by a self-gratifying society. "I've outgrown her," he may say as he moves up

the corporate ladder. Or, "I'm tired of her." Or as she matures, she may think, "He's so juvenile. I really do deserve someone better." And so begins, ever so slowly, the drift apart.

One may try frantically to keep the marriage alive, but the other steadily withdraws. Although arguments erupt and accusations are tossed back and forth, at the "bottom line" the issue is usually the same. It's not really his lack of ambition or her nagging. It's that one of the marital partners wants to gratify the self, and he is going to do it no matter what the cost.

Yes, in our society, commitment is lacking. The sincere giving of one's life in unconditional love to another is absent. The heart always holds something back. A little sanctuary for the self is maintained—a little pocket of resistance to the "till death do us part" commitment. From it came the voice, saying over and over again, "You've got a right to be happy." From society came the same voice, amplified by the promise of pleasure and a thrilling experience you've never known before. What once seemed so promising becomes a sham. Finally, the marriage crumbles.

In this chapter we've been talking about an attitude—a way of thinking. It's characterized by two factors that distort the Bible view of happiness. The

first is *individualism*—a narcissistic preoccupation with the self. The second is a *lack of commitment*—an unwillingness to commit yourself totally to anyone or anything except yourself. Promoted as the new independence, self-reliance, or “pulling your own strings,” it’s in reality what the Bible calls “the way of the world.”

Christian friend, let us immerse ourselves in the Scriptures. May its clarion calls of truth and righteousness drown out the siren song of the self. Let us give ourselves wholeheartedly to God and His way.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

3

Adjusting to New Roles

As this book is being written, the popular comic strip "Hi and Lois" is capitalizing upon the phenomenon of the working wife. In one memorable sequence, both Hi and Lois are sprawled out in easy chairs, bushed after a hard day's work. "Whoever gets his energy back first has to fix dinner," Lois declares. In another cartoon, Lois is seen in the local department store asking the clerk if they have a "macho apron" for Hi to wear while he's preparing dinner.

While we respond to the humor of this comic strip, we also see the underlying truth. Men and women are adapting to new roles being cast for them by con-

temporary society. With the demise of traditional family concepts, both women and men are finding themselves making traumatic adjustments. No longer does the husband go off to earn the living while the wife is the dutiful homemaker, keeping house and caring for the children. A new order is in vogue.

In this chapter we will examine three of the roles freshly cast by our age for women. First of all, we'll consider the woman as wage earner (in some cases, sole breadwinner). Next, we will look at the emphasis upon self-sufficiency and independence, and how it has affected today's family. Then we will think briefly about the impact that scientific advances are having upon everyone, and especially women, today.

WOMAN AS WAGE EARNER

The role of woman as wage earner is not new to the 1980s. The woman-at-work phenomenon began with the dawning of the age of industrialization. Just imagine the dramatic changes that occurred when our society became industrial rather than agricultural, urban instead of rural! Factories offered men weekly wages and the prospect of advance. No longer did they spend long hours in the fields with the risk of a poor payoff because of a bad harvest. And city life seemed more exciting.

Industrial magnates soon learned that women could do many factory jobs and would work for lower wages. The injustices that resulted were widespread and occasionally severe. Improvements were made during the war years, when female factory employment became respectable. Women welders, riveters, milling machine operators, and punch press operators made the parts and assembled the tanks, planes, and ships that their male counterparts used to defeat the enemy aggressors.

But things are different on the employment scene as we move into a new decade. For one thing, the sagging economy has placed many families under extreme financial duress. Skyrocketing interest rates and double-digit inflation have tripled the cost of homes, automobiles, and appliances. For the family to stay even or get ahead, both husband and wife have to work. How else can they meet the high mortgage payments and improve upon the standard of living achieved by their parents?

Another factor has entered the employment picture—divorce. More and more women, as heads of families, are trying to provide a comfortable life for themselves and their children. To do so, they must earn a wage substantially higher than that established by the federal government as the minimum. To

keep off the welfare rolls, they simply have to fight for more money.

The women's liberation movement has also brought changes on the work picture. "Equal pay for equal work" is one of their mottos. Its proponents are also calling for an equal chance to assume management and supervisory roles. Women aspire to every white-collar position in the employment spectrum, and more and more are being awarded them. Women are doing more than just surviving in the corporate jungle, they are thriving. A few have climbed to the very top.

Some of the effects of this social phenomenon are predictable, such as the decline of the birth rate. Women interested in an education and a career can hardly afford to take more than a year or two out to have children. They avoid getting caught in the "baby trap" at the risk of losing the satisfaction and financial rewards of a lucrative profession.

Another byproduct is the increase in day-care centers and the call for a child-care state. If women can rid themselves of the responsibility of caring for their children, it's assumed, they'll be free to pursue their vocational objectives. While they're at it, they'll neutralize the most demanding aspect of their femininity—motherhood.

A third factor in the changing employ-

ment scene is that the man is threatened by aggressive, competent female competition. Traditionally, he has been the main provider in the home. He has "brought home the bacon" to his waiting family, fought to keep his job, and worked hard to advance to positions of higher pay. He has been the one to struggle with the competition and to make the all-important decisions. In addition, there has always been a quality of "mystery" to his going off to work. His tales of what happened at the office once filled the family with a sense of admiration.

But now the mystery's gone—exploded by the intrusion of women into every facet of his employment world. Furthermore, his position is threatened by skilled, bright, highly educated, aggressive females. Although he protests, he's afraid they might do the job better than he does.

The real trouble comes when she gets the job. With the employment situation tight in most job markets, when a woman is awarded the position, a man is left out. And if he remains unemployed, he loses his position as breadwinner. He has lost his role within the family as provider—and with it some of his pride and sense of purpose. This can only drag down a society trying to lift itself up.

A further shock comes to the man if he

must work for a woman. This role reversal undermines his sense of confidence and places him in an uncomfortable, unnatural position. He's not irreplaceable anymore, so he's inclined either to drop out or become a "predator," living on welfare. This not only denigrates him, it affects his entire family.

To summarize this point, both blessings and cursings prevail in a society where woman is cast in the role of wage earner. Families *can* advance socially and economically. The children *can* afford to go to college or develop their interests in music or the arts. The woman *does* develop her skills and realize her potential, thus making her a more satisfied and productive person. But the man's role as provider is threatened. The children are not given the full attention they need. And in some instances, an unsettling role reversal occurs between husband and wife—often producing unhappy consequences.

AUTONOMY

A second role being cast upon women and men by contemporary society is that of autonomy or self-sufficiency. The woman is being encouraged from many sources to cut herself loose from the psychological and emotional connections that previously kept her from living independently. She's being called upon to

go it alone, to change her image, to break free from the traditional models that inhibited her full development as a person who doesn't need to depend upon anyone.

The focal point of this movement has been to attack the concept of women as the "weaker sex." The tag carries with it the connotation of dependency, of leaning upon the man to supply her physical and emotional needs. No longer is she to be a frail spectator; she's to become involved in every aspect of life.

The rapidly increasing participation of women in sports is one evidence of this trend. Most high schools and colleges have added basketball, softball, and track to the traditional women's sports of tennis and volleyball.

Yes, the female is tougher, less dependent, more self-sufficient. She's cutting herself free from the sources of strength and help she's long been accustomed to. "You've come a long way, baby!"

The breakup of the nuclear family is a key ingredient in the new "mix." No longer does the scheme of father at work, mother at home, and children at school, with the resultant strong ties and means of strength and emotional sustenance, apply in our society. Men, women, and children are encouraged to cut themselves adrift, to "do their own thing," to make it on their own without need of anyone.

One of the strongest ties a woman has is with her children. Concern for their well-being and security tugs mightily at her heartstrings. She's reluctant to leave them in the hands of another. But the availability of child-care facilities eases her conscience. Competent, caring people, she's told, will attend to the children while she works. Sometimes they are subsidized by the government. So she turns her offspring over to surrogate mothers, and thus breaks free from one more traditional tie. But again—who knows at what price? For her and the children? Society? Her husband?

Perhaps a more insidious form of autonomy being promoted by some segments of our society is the call for "open marriages." In this arrangement both the husband and wife are free to do as they please. The attempt is made to eliminate the traditional obligations a husband has felt toward his wife and she toward him. Both partners are therefore free to find gratification wherever their needs may take them. The restrictions of a traditional marriage relationship are thus removed.

Related to this is the so-called "marriage contract," where the terms of the marital relationship with its contingent financial arrangements are spelled out in a legal agreement. The terms of the commitment to one another are reduced

to a series of binding statements arrived at by arbitration.

About the only favorable aspect of this concept is that it keeps lawyers busy. Otherwise, it reduces marriage to a negotiable commodity and men and women to mere functionaries. Money is paid, services are rendered, and that's the extent of it. Any concept of the marriage as a growing, fulfilling, total relationship between two very much alive human beings with deep needs is thus eliminated. The "piece of paper" sets the boundaries of the relationship, and more attention is focused upon whether its terms are followed than whether real human needs for love and giving are being met.

The current emphasis on autonomy, therefore, poses a serious threat to the traditional roles of men and women. It "bends" the biblical profile. Yet how quickly the quest for independence leads one into a more severe bondage! How soon the vital human needs become repressed by artificial classification and stereotypes! How quickly women and men become automatons, playing their role like some emotionless robot!

Now, a healthy self-concept, realization of potential, exercise of talents, a sense of independence—all of these and more are vitally important to every person. But not when the cost is the very

heart of humanity and personhood itself—the need to give and receive genuine love and fulfillment. Autonomy ends where the heart begins.

MACHINE

Our advanced, technological age has cast people, especially women, in yet another new role—that of a machine. Rather than seeing her body as created by God and endowed with undeniable emotional and spiritual needs, she is to view it as simply the sum total of its physical and biological parts. The more the contemporary woman can be relieved from the traditional accouterments of her femininity, she is told, the more chance she has of becoming self-determinate and “fulfilled.”

Undeniably, in the past the woman's progress has been hindered by her capacity to have babies. As high as her ambitions may have been, pregnancy either curtailed or eliminated them. Women today, however, are breaking free from the “baby trap.” Nearly fool-proof birth control methods mean that she can regulate the time and number of her pregnancies. She can have the children (more frequently, the child) when it would be the least disruptive to her career.

In recent days, advances have been made to relieve her from carrying chil-

dren as a necessary prerequisite to motherhood. By such methods as *in vitro* fertilization and womb implants, her egg can be fertilized by her husband's sperm in a laboratory, nurtured, and the tiny blastocyst implanted in some other woman's womb. That woman can then carry the couple's fetus to term and give it birth. The child belongs to the original parents in every way, but the mother has avoided the inconvenience and pain (plus the stretchmarks) of childbirth.

Think for a moment about what this means. It is possible for a couple to have children without any of the traditional (and previously essential) contingencies. Eliminated, for example, is the need for the act of love itself. Egg and sperm are united in a laboratory; Mom and Dad don't even need to touch one another. Childbirth is also bypassed; it can be bought and sold for the right price. Motherhood too is thereby abolished—except in name only.

In history, whenever the body has been treated only as a machine, the results have been disastrous. The awful experiments of Nazi Germany are but one example. Dehumanization reduces a society to its lowest common denominator. The essential, basic crying needs of humanity are suppressed. In viewing her body as just a machine, the woman not only loses her motherhood but also

neutralizes that which makes her a woman. And tragic are the consequences.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have discussed three new roles being cast for women by contemporary society. She is principal wage earner. She is to see herself as autonomous. And she is to view her body as a machine. Each of these viewpoints represents a departure from her traditional role as wife and mother. Yet each has a subtle attraction, an element of acceptability.

How is today's Christian woman, then, to view herself? What role is she to play? In the following section we will consider three alluring but faulty views of womanhood. Then, after a chapter about men, we'll turn to the Bible for its profile of happy, free, self-fulfilled womanhood.

PART II

Faulty Models Examined

4

The Women's Liberation Movement

The profound changes taking place in contemporary society have placed many of today's women in a dilemma. Powerful social and economic forces have cut her adrift from her traditional role as wife, mother, and queen of the kitchen. The more she hears and reads about her rights and her new freedom, the more she wonders which direction she should go—and how far. Should she stay as close as possible to the pattern established for her by her mother and grandmother? Should she accept some of the tenets of the feminist movement? Or should she kick over the traces and become fully "liberated" in the most radical sense?

After all, she reasons, more and more of her friends are working. An increasing number are economically independent, and some are doing extremely well because they have good-paying, responsible positions. Current figures reveal that 30 percent of all condominiums are being purchased by single or divorced women. A higher percentage of women than ever before are holding management and supervisory posts, or have entered the honored professions of medicine and law. Their freewheeling, self-sufficient lifestyle seems filled with glamour and adventure—offering an allurements that has many housewives wondering what they are missing.

In a real sense, our culture has freed woman from her traditional moorings. Released from her place in the home and marriage, she asks what direction her life should take. Three distinct new models are being presented—each of them a distortion of the biblical profile. For that reason, we will take some time to examine critically these alternative lifestyles. In this chapter we will look closely at the women's liberation movement, and in the two that follow we will discuss Christian feminism and the "total woman" concept. Although each may contain elements of truth, none offers a totally satisfactory option from a biblical perspective.

THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT

A lot has happened since Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963 and initiated the struggle for women's rights. Every facet of our national life has been affected by the call for women's liberation and equality. In the employment arena especially, tremendous progress has been made. It hardly bothers us anymore to see that the person climbing the pole to repair the wires is a "telephone woman." Numerous inequities have been set right, and more and more doors of opportunity are opening to women every day.

In fact, to be honest, enough progress has been made to make the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment almost hollow. The three brief statements of the amendment guaranteeing that equality of rights should not be denied on the basis of sex are definitely "after the fact."

Upon closer examination, however, the women's liberation movement is calling for far more than a guarantee of protection from discrimination. In its most ardent forms, it is advocating both a totally new view of women and a radical restructuring of society.

WHAT IT ATTACKS

The feminist movement is primarily reactionary; that is, it is a statement of

denial. The focus of its attention is upon the conventional role of women in society. The woman who remains at home to raise her family, serve her husband, and maintain the household, the liberationists claim, is trapped in a dissatisfying and unfulfilling role.

They point out, for example, that the woman at home finds herself increasingly isolated from the mainstream of life. Socially, her world is restricted to the contacts she and her husband have together, except for family and close neighbors. She is too homebound to develop an active interest in political life, and she is isolated from any role in the shaping and function of government. Economically, the traditional housewife is the most isolated of all, dependent entirely upon her husband for her support.

In many quarters of society, the homemaker feels that she is considered inferior. She's not educated enough or "tough" enough to make it in a man's world. Simply because she is woman, the feminists point out, she is excluded from certain job opportunities or professional careers.

The feminists are also attacking the disparities in educational possibilities, professional life, and wage-earning potential. They don't feel it's fair for a woman and man to have the same seniority and do the same job, yet for the

woman to receive substantially less money. "Equal pay for equal work" is a main plank in the feminist platform.

"Rights" is therefore the central issue in the feminist movement. The isolation, dependency, inferiority, and disparity of the traditional women's roles are downplayed in the attempt to bring about equality and fairness in society.

HOW IT ATTACKS

The liberationists move toward their goals by a sequence of vehement denials. The most critical is the denial of task distinction in the employment world. They want to eliminate totally the concept that some jobs are men's and others are women's. They are working to erase the social pattern long in existence that doctors, lawyers, and corporation presidents are men.

Along with this is an attempt to diminish or eradicate the traditional values of womanhood. Being wife and mother, having a good home, caring for family needs—these have long been the most satisfying aspects of a woman's life. And naturally so, for they are at the very heart of her femininity. The liberation movement, however, would redefine or eliminate them.

The attempt to erase these unique characteristics of womanhood is destined to produce disastrous consequences. No

matter what may be said, throughout history differing employment and social patterns have been established because men and women are different. To ignore that difference would be disastrous. Anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote, "Are not sex differences exceedingly valuable, one of the resources of our human nature that every society has used, but no society has yet begun to use to the full?" (Margaret Mead, *Male and Female*, New York, 1949, p. 40). Rather than struggling to erase the male/female distinctions, would we not do better to use those differences to the best advantage of society? Especially since they were built into the human race by God in the first place.

Another factor must be considered. The liberation effort does not want simply to remove typical feminine qualities, it is working to build into them traditional masculine traits. The campaign is for women to develop a ruthlessness, to take risks, to become fiercely competitive. In this framework, however, a girl must be taught early to "think masculine." She must be conditioned to adopt male criteria for success and values. And she is encouraged to cultivate the masculine qualities that result in success in the employment arena.

But is anyone looking into the future? What are the long-term results of such

dramatic changes? Are not the feminists shortsighted and unimaginative in simply replacing feminine ideals with masculine ones? Have they really thought through what they are making of themselves, or how much they are losing in the process? Will the drastic adjustments they are promoting produce the results they desire?

WHAT FEMINISTS WANT

The goals of the feminist movement may be summarized as follows:

1. An equal relationship between men and women. No longer should the man use his superior strength nor the woman her feminine wiles to gain advantage over the other. They must see themselves as being on equal ground.

2. Equal employment opportunities and equal pay.

3. An updating of the Social Security system and pension plans to remove disparities.

4. Repeal of anti-abortion laws. Nothing entraps a woman in her femininity more than childbearing. Abortion eliminates that possibility.

5. Reforms in tax laws; such as those forbidding deductions for child-care expenses.

6. Equal educational opportunities.

7. Changes in property laws.

8. The right to choose their own careers.

9. Total elimination of the dominance/subjection pattern within the marriage. Both moderate and extreme efforts are being made to achieve these objectives.

THE RADICAL FEMINISTS

To realize their goals, the radical feminists are making extreme demands upon society. A brief consideration of their goals will indicate how far they want to go, and give some idea of the impact their efforts may already be having on some segments of our society. You see, the extremists within the feminist movement are actually calling for a new kind of woman. Their ideal female will totally set aside all traditional concepts. She will restructure her philosophy and lifestyle to achieve complete liberation. These are some of her objectives:

The abolition of marriage. The new feminists are calling for the removal of the traditional concept of marriage from society. The marital relationship is decried as the basic hindrance to the progress of women, for it binds her to a role and set of relationships that the feminists feel are both denigrating and disparaging to womanhood.

Rather than protecting and uplifting women, they view marriage as an oppressor. Sheila Cronan, in fact, likened the

marital relationship to slavery and called for its total abolition. If woman is to secure her freedom, they maintain, she must campaign for the removal of marriage as part of society. It traps, humiliates, and subjugates the woman, they say, hindering her development and potential for autonomy and happiness.

Family life is also devalued by the radical feminists. They don't want women emotionally or psychologically tied to their husbands and children. They want them to be islands of autonomy, floating free from the encumbrances of such feelings as loyalty, love, and servitude.

The radical feminists promote a cold professionalism in *the employment world*. Not only are women to compete fiercely with men, they are to be hostile toward them. Shulamith Firestone, in *Dialectics of Sex*, saw man as exploiter and woman as the exploited. A proponent of the New Left, she interpreted the entire feminist issue as a class conflict to be resolved on Marxist terms. Valerie Solonis and Betsy Warrior went even further. They established "The Society for Cutting Up Men" (SCUM), bitterly attacking males as those who start wars and disrupt society.

True, these are extremes. But the attitude—the mindset—is unmistakable. It's one more influence, one more force

being brought to bear upon women who are sincerely trying to determine their true role in society.

The underlying philosophy of the feminist movement, especially in its more radical forms, may be clearly defined as narcissistic and hedonistic. The proponent of the new feminism is preoccupied with herself. All she can see is her image, her feelings, her rights, her needs, her uniqueness. She is obsessed with freedom—but all too often it's a freedom from loving, caring, and giving of herself. She takes. She makes some commitments, even for marriage, but she puts heavy restrictions upon them. And she reserves the right to back out of a relationship whenever her "needs" are not being met.

No wonder the feminists are against marriage! No wonder they advocate the breakup of the traditional family. These represent "ties that bind," commitments, demands, obligations. It's from these she is seeking "liberation." She wants to be absolutely free to pursue the gratifications of a self that is never satisfied by its self.

THE SHORTCOMINGS

The feminist movement, it seems, is doomed to failure. Of itself, and certainly by biblical standards, it cannot succeed. Here are some reasons why.

For one thing, the extreme feminist does not really know who she is fighting. She attacks "male chauvinist pigs." She howls in indignation at the conventions of modern society, blaming hundreds of years of culture for her dilemma. She speaks despidngly of those women who are content in their traditional roles, and who do not beat their saucepans into swords and their mophandles into spears and join her cause.

Her real enemy, however, is herself. She's struggling against the demands of her God-given femininity. She's resisting her built-in acclimation toward her husband and toward motherhood. She's fighting her natural yearnings, built into her by the Lord Himself, to fulfill the role that He designed for her.

She's also fighting a society that did not become that way by accident. The age-old, traditional concept of the nuclear family, with its mutual interdependence and support, started way back in Eden. Through the long centuries, there have been some adjustments and modifications, but it has remained basically the same. Changing the family is a massive undertaking—especially when the foundation for its structure is rooted in the basic distinctions of masculinity and femininity as determined by the Lord of creation.

On the surface, the goals of the femi-

nist movement sound so right: freedom, equality, independence, self-determination. But the end product, should she succeed in achieving it, is frightening indeed. It offers at best the bondage of an autonomous slavery to the self. It calls for a world that begins and ends with one's self, with the self as its only source of satisfaction. No person, man or woman, who would create such a world could ever be truly happy. This course of life could only produce an agonized, empty despair.

5

Christian Feminist Views

A perplexing truism about 20th-century Christianity is that movements which begin as purely secular soon find their expression among believers. While they may appear in an altered format or be glossed over with a religious veneer, they are the same social or cultural ideal. They have simply been wrapped in the jargon of the church. For some reason, believers cannot resist taking to themselves in some modified form whatever is currently popular in the world.

It came as no surprise to many, then, when the women's liberation movement surfaced among believers as the Christian feminist movement. The basic prem-

ises and goals of the liberationists have been enthusiastically accepted and fervently advocated by a growing number of women and men within the realm of the church.

As a result, many people are confused. Others have taken sides. In some religious circles, quick and surprising gains were made by women. Inequities were swept aside, and most limitations upon career opportunities for women within the church were lifted. It can probably be safely said that women of all denominations are less restricted by their sex than before, and that they are experiencing a new freedom.

In some cases the Christian feminists have been met with skepticism, impatient tolerance, or even outright hostility. The controversy has raged between the established pattern and the new ideas. As a result, dedicated women who sincerely want to serve Christ and experience all He has for them are unsettled and uncertain. And they're looking to the church and the Bible for definite answers. Therefore, a brief analysis of Christian feminism will give us a better perspective. So, after a brief look at the history and premises of Christian feminism, we will identify its goals, focus particularly upon its relationship to the Scriptures, and conclude with some observations.

HISTORY

No one disputes the statement that Christian feminism is a direct product of the women's liberation movement of the late sixties and seventies. Three publications may be identified as initiating the drive for liberation within the church. The first was a book authored by Russell Prohl in 1957, *Women in the Church*. It raised the question of the role of women in ecclesiastical activity, and opened the door to new thinking.

Then an article by Letha Scanzoni, a Christian freelance writer and Professor of Sociology at Indiana University, was published. It was titled "Women's Place: Silence or Service?" (*Eternity*, February 1966). A growing number of articles began to appear, and feminist conferences for Christian women were well attended. In 1974, Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty co-authored an influential presentation and defense of Christian feminism titled, *All We're Meant to Be: a Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation*. This led to numerous additional publications on the subject by such authors as Paul K. Jewett, Virginia Mollenkott, Patricia Gundry, and others. The express train was now rolling along rapidly, picking up steam as it went.

Traditionalists responded. Charles C. Ryrie's important work *The Role of Women in the Church* was republished by

Moody Press. Elizabeth Elliott spoke out with sensitivity and clarity in defense of traditional roles. Today, the issue is being discussed and examined from every conceivable angle.

Within Christian feminism are both moderate and extreme positions. The moderates are concerned that the Scriptures may have been misinterpreted down through the centuries. They are examining the Bible closely and seeking the Lord's will in determining how they should behave. They're concerned lest traditional concepts and roles be blindly accepted without occasional re-examination and evaluation. They feel that the women's liberation movement, which has brought a fresh look at women by all of society, may have some positive elements in it for Christianity as well. Since everyone is thinking about the role of women in the home and society, they naturally want to apply it to the church as well.

The more radical element of Christian feminism is represented by Jewett, Mollenkott, and others. Mollenkott is fond of quoting psychologist Otto Rank, who held the position that women in the past had to be "made over" by men (no doubt easily accomplished because of man's superior strength). Now, she says, women must band together to discover and restore their original reality. To do this, all

traditional male-produced stereotypes must be abolished. She feels this has to be done so that women can determine their true place within society. The greatest enemy to this effort, she insists, are Christian women in American homes and churches who "know their place" and refuse to change.

Paul K. Jewett, author of *Man as Male and Female*, focuses his attention upon Paul's statements in the epistles about male and female roles in home, church, and society. Jewett accuses the apostle of being too bound by his pharisaical background and legalistic training to speak objectively. Paul's comments are therefore claimed to be culturally confined, no longer valid after the end of the first century.

BASIC PREMISE

Although each new proponent of the Christian feminist movement has a different concept of its origins and goals, all have one thing in common. They feel that traditional roles of women in the home, church, and society have kept them from achieving the spiritual maturity God intended them to have. Because they have been relegated to the kitchen, banned from the pulpit, and exhorted to submit, the Christian feminists say they have been denied for centuries the full development of their abilities.

They have been unable to determine and exercise their spiritual gifts. They have been inflicted with a forced spiritual immaturity.

Now it's time, they argue, for believing women to break free from the narrow confines that religious tradition has placed upon them. Equality, opportunity, and freedom are to be demanded of—if necessary wrested from—an unwilling masculine world. The feminists encourage women to accept positions of top church leadership and even seek the pastorate. The elements of their femininity that have held them back—having babies, tending the house, caring for the children—are to be swept aside in the drive for what they call “maturity.”

One can readily see that more than the ordination of women is at stake here. Like her secular counterpart, the Christian feminist is actually campaigning for a restructuring of her society. She wants to replace conventional attitudes and age-old stereotypes with liberated patterns of thinking. The Christian woman is to consider herself equal and free. She will see that exciting new opportunities lie ahead for her—as soon as a reluctant male-dominated Christian world can be coerced to turn her loose.

GOALS

Interestingly, the goals of the extreme

Christian feminist movement are primarily task-centered. By this I mean that the woman wants to be free to do the things and operate with all the freedoms she feels man has. She wants to abolish all stereotypes and traditional roles. Like her secular counterpart, she fights against the thinking that "men do this but women do that." She wants to be part of an egalitarian society, in which male/female roles are freely and openly interchanged.

Particularly under attack by the Christian feminists is the biblical concept of masculine authority and feminine submission. That pattern severely limits the potential of women. It therefore needs to be broken once and for all. Within the marriage, they say, either spouse should be free to fulfill whatever demands the family requires: wage earner, housekeeper, disciplinarian, gardener, floor-mopper. Neither should be over the other, the Christian feminist insists. They should share equally in the decision-making process, money-making potential, and parental responsibilities.

Even wider views are promoted by radical Christian feminists. For example, they support abortion on demand as a means of escaping the "baby trap." They see childbearing as limiting woman's potential in the employment world.

In addition, they cannot see any

reason women should not be ordained or given bishoprics. So they campaign for the ordination of women. Female enrollment in our seminaries has increased dramatically in the past few years.

Marriage, in particular, is redefined by radical Christian feminists. Citing Ephesians 5:21, they insist upon equal submission within the marriage. Quoting Galatians 3:28, they claim that women and men are on a par in everything except their biological makeup. On that basis they call for equal partnership within the marriage. The concept of male headship is rejected as chauvinistic and nonbiblical.

In the employment world too the cry is for change. Not only in the secular world but also within the church the Christian feminist demands that all jobs should be equally available to women. Ordination is the specific goal, and an increasing number of denominations are now granting women top leadership positions.

The effort, therefore, is to get women out of the nursery and into the labor market. The "little woman at home" is to become, conditions permitting, the corporation executive, local pastor, or missions director. No restrictions or limitations are to be placed upon her just because she happens to be female.

BIBLICAL EMPHASIS

The Christian feminist movement does

not agree with those who say they reject the Scriptures; rather, it claims to use the Bible as the basis for its objectives. However, the traditional interpretations of the key texts that relate to the roles of women are being challenged. Patricia Gundry was probably representative of many Christian feminists in an address presented at Calvin College. Defending her position, which she says led to the loss of her husband's teaching job at Moody Bible Institute, she called for a "new hermeneutic." But one wonders if she is not starting with her feminist conclusions and looking for a methodology that would produce them.

The challenge of the Christian feminists to the historical interpretation of the "women's role" passages comes from four basic lines of reasoning. A brief look at them will be helpful.

1. *The biblical statements are culturally conditioned.* Probably the most direct means Christian feminists have of defusing the biblical passages that spell out the roles of men and women is to insist that they were only intended for the first century. By doing this, they can readily acknowledge that the New Testament passages did establish a hierarchy in presenting the male/female roles in society. And they can insist that they did apply to early believers, and that they were to be rigidly obeyed.

But then they add that these principles do not apply to the twentieth century. Scanzoni and Hardesty maintain, for example, that an interpretation of Scripture that would make any social order obsolete is not acceptable. The New Testament passages about male headship/feminine submission, they contend, were relevant only to the cultural framework of the Roman world. They do not apply to today.

They go on to point out that a direct presentation of male/female equality would have been categorically rejected by the leaders of that society. Galatians 3:18, they insist, was as far as Paul dared go. Any further statement of equality would have disrupted the existing system of male supremacy, and would have been laughed into oblivion—along with the gospel message the world so badly needed to hear.

2. *The meaning is changed.* In their determination to find biblical support for their position, some extreme biblical feminists have altered the meaning of certain texts.

One husband-wife team, Duane Liftin points out, did this with the Greek word *hupotasso*, translated “to subject.” They point out that *hupo* means “under” and *tasso* means “arrange,” and note that this was originally a military term. Paul used it in reference to Christians in

Ephesians 5, and these feminists said it means "relate yourselves to," "respond to," "adjust yourselves to"—not "put yourself under." Liftin comments, "Having thus switched the apostle's meaning—and then giving similar treatment to the analogy of Christ and the church—the authors conclude, 'There is nothing in the fifth chapter of Ephesians that would even remotely indicate that wives are responsible to submit to their husbands.' " (Duane Liftin, "Do Biblical Feminists Have a Point?" Moody Monthly, December 1979, p. 20.) This blatant changing of meaning is totally unacceptable. It violates every accepted method of interpreting God's Word.

Because the feminists reject the traditional interpretation of the key texts on male/female roles, their tendency is to dispute the accepted position. If necessary, they will actually change the meaning. (One way this is slickly done is to give priority to the Genesis 2 account of creation and downplay Genesis 1.) Inevitably, the fresh approach produces an interpretation that is compatible with what the feminists believe. Again, the danger is that they approach the text from a predetermined position. Yet this is exactly what they accuse the traditionalists of doing.

3. *Paul's contradictions.* Sometimes the apostle Paul is viewed by the Christian

feminists as a theological "schizophrenic." They say that he was right on target when he wrote Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." But whenever he wrote about role relationships, in such passages as Colossians 3:18 or Ephesians 5:22, they claim that he was influenced by his rabbinical teaching. Because of his training, they say, he was biased on this key issue. He could not carry out the full implications of Galatians 3:28, nor apply the equality and liberty of the gospel to the male/female issue. He reached one high point; then he slid back into his rabbinical past.

The fallacy of this reasoning is instantly clear. The feminists have thus reserved for themselves the right to accept parts of Paul's writings as truth, and see parts of it as distorted by his deeply ingrained religious prejudices. Sadly, this kind of thinking can only stem from (not lead to) a denial of the inerrancy and authority of the Word of God. It amounts to a rejection by the radical Christian feminists of the biblical view of life and the world.

4. *The call for a new hermeneutic.* This aspect of the Christian feminist's relation to the Scriptures is perhaps the most telling of all. Hermeneutics may be

defined as "the principles of biblical interpretation." These methods have been established for many centuries. Structure, type of literature, historical background, geographical conditions, context, linguistic considerations—all of these and more are involved in the interpretation of a biblical passage. The benefits of centuries of scholarship and insight are available to conscientious Bible scholars today.

But now, in one fell swoop, the radical feminists want to brush it all aside. They are calling for the development of a "new hermeneutic." But what would make it new? Grammatical studies? Cultural? Historical? Psychological? Theological? No. All of these are now involved in a balanced and carefully tested method of interpretation. What makes it new is its conclusions!

No definitions of the "new hermeneutic" have been forthcoming by the proponents of Christian feminism. One therefore cannot help but feel that they are open to whatever leads them to their foregone conclusions. It's not the method that's important, it's the result. They want an approach, I'm afraid, that will produce the interpretation that aligns with their position.

The Christian feminists are claiming that their viewpoint is biblical. They are challenging the traditional interpreta-

tion of the "role passages" of the epistles on the four fronts we have discussed. And it's here more than anywhere else that they fall glaringly short of establishing their case.

OBSERVATIONS

We are the first to agree that the Christian feminists do have a basis for complaint. Too long in Christian circles women have been treated as inferior. The equalities that are theirs within the framework of God's salvation have been aggressively or subtly denied them. Their membership in the body of Christ has often been that of a second-class citizen; they've had to wear the "yellow star of David" on their sleeve too long.

It's also true that the mode of the age has called for a re-examination of feminine roles within the church, home, and society. The opportunity is here for a modification and clarification of the traditional hierarchy.

But, like all else in the church, it must not come at the expense of the women's most powerful declaration of liberation—the Bible. If the authority of God's Word is removed, if its texts are misinterpreted, if verbal plenary inspiration is denied, we are all adrift. The anchor of truth is gone, and we are destined to wander aimlessly on the turbulent seas of oppression, tyranny, error, and darkness.

6

The "Total Woman" Caricature

In sharp contrast to the feminist call for a liberalization of female roles, a rather startling position appeared from the conservative viewpoint and quickly captured the fancy of many church women. In 1973, Marabel Morgan published *The Total Woman*, and it soon climbed to the top of the lists of Christian best-sellers. So pervasive was the impact of her book and her seminars that she made the cover of *Time* (March 14, 1977).

In conservative religious circles, controversy surrounded the book from the moment of its publication. Some Christian bookstores refused to retail it;

others sold it from under the counter. Enthusiastic followers of Morgan had copies placed in their church libraries, but alarmed pastors and shocked deacons quickly had it removed. What was it that gave this book such a strong impact?

THESIS

Morgan's viewpoint is conservative in that it promotes the biblical concept of masculine authority and feminine submission. The wife is to be subordinate to her husband—almost to a fault.

Underlying the total woman viewpoint is the presupposition that most Christian marriages are filled with unhappiness. Husband and wife feel unfulfilled and dissatisfied. Something very important is missing, Morgan says, and she knows how to make the marriage complete. If the woman will subordinate herself to her husband, making him the sole object of her affection and the very center of her life (apart from God, of course), she can bring her marriage back to life. In the process, she will find the marital bliss she's been missing out on, and experience the joy of becoming a "total woman."

Morgan wrote, "I do believe it is possible for almost any wife to have her husband absolutely adore her in just a few week's time. She can revive romance, re-

establish communication, break down barriers, and put sizzle back into her marriage. It really is up to her" (Marabel Morgan, *The Total Woman*, p. 20). Her book then proceeds to tell the woman how to rekindle relationships. Though she discusses many practical areas of living together, the focus of her attention is upon the sexual aspect of marriage. She gives rather frank and ingenious advice on how women can "turn on" their husbands.

PREMISE

On a broader scope than may have been Morgan's intention, the total woman approach to marriage closely identifies a woman's sexuality with power. Her premise is that if a woman can make her husband feel that he's idolized by fawning over his masculinity and lavishing hero-worship upon him, she'll soon have him overwhelmed with adoration for her. Then he'll do anything she wants. The marriage (on her terms) will be complete.

A number of Christian writers have picked up on the same theme. They encourage the wife, by mixing her feminine gifts with ingenuity, to make her husband into the kind of man she wants him to be. Damian Cooper's *You Can Be the Wife of a Happy Husband*, though more moderate than Morgan, takes the same

approach. The woman is really in the driver's seat, asserting herself in subtle ways to create the home situation she wants.

EVALUATION

If you accept Morgan's premise, the total woman idea sounds marvelous. After all, what could be better in this age of sexual permissiveness and quick divorces than keeping the marital fires burning? Especially if you're building up the sagging male ego in the process—and having fun while you're at it.

Upon closer scrutiny, however, this concept is shallow and demeaning to both women and men. It turns out, upon examination, that the total woman is in actuality a caricature—not real, but plastic. And the husband who is so easily manipulated by her is both gullible and incredibly naive. He too is a cardboard stereotype. As we think through the total-woman model together, we'll readily discern that it represents a distortion of the biblical profile, and that it does not work in real life.

1. *Demeaning to Women.* The wife who accepts the total-woman concept as a means of bringing new life into her marriage is placing herself beneath the level God has designed for her. By making herself irresistible and available to her husband in the silly ways Morgan prescribes,

she is casting herself in the humiliating role of "gratifier."

Think about it a moment. By playing the alluring role she thinks will please and excite her husband, she is in actuality making of herself a sex object. In the process of adopting a provocative role, she sacrifices her real identity. And she closes her eyes to her need of a mature husband/wife relationship.

"Become the woman of his dreams," Morgan advises. But does she think he really believes his dreams, his fantasies? If he's mature and stable, he does not. In fact, if he saw his fantasies as real, he'd be adolescent indeed. He knows the difference, and he hopes his wife does too. He is more than willing to accept his wife as she is.

Even beyond that, her purpose for playing the total-woman role all too often is to manipulate him. Morgan's thesis is that if the wife makes her husband adore her, he'll give her anything she wants. So her goal in the role-playing game is to get her own way, to achieve her own objectives, to serve herself. That is both dehumanizing to her and insulting to him.

The real threat comes to the marriage if she succeeds. By playing up to his fantasies, she is actually demeaning herself. And if he can be so easily fooled, in her heart she'll lose what respect she has

left for him. They'll both have opted for an artificial, shortsighted substitute for reality.

Another point needs to be made. What has happened through all of this to the biblical concept of a virtuous, godly, mature woman? Or where's the capable, confident, resourceful woman of courage presented in Proverbs 31 and other Scripture passages? The approach of the total woman, it seems, is juvenile and debasing. It falls far short of the lofty concept found in the Bible. Petty deceptions, shallow manipulation, childish roles—these hardly match the dignity and grace of the biblical profile of a marriage.

2. *Demeaning to Men.* The total-woman approach to a marriage is no less demeaning to the man than to the woman. It also makes of him something less than the Lord intended him to be.

Consider the concept of his supposed need for gratification. If this is so, all it takes to satisfy and please him is to cater to his male ego and fulfill his fantasies. But that's a shallow interpretation of the masculine mystique. Most of all, a man wants to be loved and accepted for what he is. Few men indeed would be "bowled over" by the flattering, juvenile methods suggested by Morgan. They live on a different plane. As one man told me, "I hope my wife gets this out of her system before too long."

Furthermore, men are not as obsessed with their male ego as Morgan seems to believe. What kind of man would be so readily taken in? And, as pointed out above, how could he be respected if he were such a pushover?

If the total-woman approach were to become workable, both husband and wife would have to suspend adulthood. She would become the aggressor. And he would have to cater to her whims. He would allow her to inflate his male ego and then give in to her wishes. All the while, both would be playing roles.

EVALUATION

The total-woman approach is at best a caricature. It accepts an adolescent view of man and woman that in reality is denigrating to both. He didn't marry a "sex object" who would fawn over him, be awestruck by his masculinity, and play the role of "gratifier." He married a *woman*.

By the same token, she didn't marry a macho egotist who would believe her exaggerations about his prowess and desirability. Nor did she wed a person who was obsessed with his fantasies and easily coerced into letting her have her own way. She married a *man*.

The total-woman concept is a distortion of reality. It's a play, acted out upon a stage by shallow characters. In real

life, it's demeaning and juvenile. It doesn't work at all.

A better way must be found. And that way, as we shall see, is profiled in God's Word.

7

Man in a Macho World

In discussing the “gender benders” of contemporary society—the forces distorting the biblical roles of people today—we’ve focused most of our attention upon the woman. This is because the primary pressures have been directed at them. It’s the woman who has entered the work force in increasing numbers, and who has been pushing for equal opportunity and equal pay. It’s the woman who has been struggling to break free from traditional stereotypes. It’s the woman who has sought new sources for personal fulfillment and satisfaction outside the home. It’s the woman who is campaigning for an equal rights amendment to our Constitution. And it’s the woman who is pushing out the perimeters of her world.

Yet the Christian man is involved as well. He too is confronted by forces in our contemporary age that would move him beyond the pattern God has marked out for him in His Word. He too must examine the Scriptures closely and commit himself to being the kind of man God would have him to be. And he must steadfastly resist the powerful, popular influences of today's society if he is to be the man, husband, and father that God expects.

In this chapter, therefore, we will think about some of the forces of our modern world that would distort the biblical model for a happy, successful man. We will center our attention upon the "macho man" image so prevalent today. We will consider its origin, look at its faulty premises, and analyze some of the myths that go along with it.

THE HEMINGWAY HERO

My conviction is that the "macho man" concept—the seductively handsome, virile, self-sufficient, independent male—had its roots in the writings of Ernest Hemingway. This immensely popular writer depicted his male heroes virtually the same way in nearly every novel or short story. They were strong, silent adventurers who made their way through life alone. Many were soldiers; others were big-game hunters or woods-

men. They did "what they had to do" with irrepressible determination, and bore the disappointments and hurts of life with stoic resolution. They died early and tragically, and were usually allowed only a fleeting glimpse of happiness before it disappeared forever.

The similarities between the Hemingway characters and the Wild West hero are striking. He rode in mysteriously at just the right moment to save the ranch and rescue the fair maiden. His silent strength and superhuman prowess with the gun or rope would rid the world of evil, then he would ride off into the sunset to fulfill his destiny. He would not let himself love or be loved. He was always too high-purposed and restless to settle down.

Neither of these pictures accurately portrays man as God made him. They aren't realistic in any way. Such mundane essentials as the need for a job or the desire for a home and children would wreck the heroic image completely. So these are caricatures—glossy portraits of man that could never appear in real life. Yet they prepared the way for the distorted view of man so prevalent today.

THE PLAYBOY MENTALITY

The macho-man image is familiar to anyone who watches television or reads magazine ads. He is youthful, athletic,

and ruggedly masculine. He wears the latest fashions, smokes the right cigarettes, drives an expensive sports car, and succeeds in business. He has few emotional attachments and travels a lot. Beautiful women cluster around him.

But let's think about this "playboy" image of man for a moment. When he looks for a woman, he wants her to be independent and strong. If she indicates any sort of emotional attachment, he's gone. He wants her to be self-sufficient and contented before she comes to him. That way he won't feel obligated after the interlude is over.

The macho man certainly doesn't want his woman to have a conscience! That would get in the way of their "liberated" relationship. Pregnancy, of course, is out of the question. And if it should occur, it's her responsibility, not his. He wants only physical gratification, preferably from beautiful women, so that he can feed his already super-inflated ego.

The macho man wages war, along with Hugh Hefner, against what he defines as the restraints of old-fashioned American puritanism. He dislikes anything that smacks of morality or religion because that would limit his hedonistic lifestyle. He actually seems to believe that the world—especially women—exists for the sole purpose of supplying him pleasure.

MYTHS HE BELIEVES

The macho man believes a number of errors about women. When you read the same literature he reads, you quickly discover that he has numerous dismaying misconceptions. No wonder he has serious problems seeing himself in the traditional role of faithful husband and loving father! Until his attitudes change, he will be unable to establish and maintain a meaningful, fulfilling relationship with a wife or children.

Examine with me some of the myths many modern men believe. As you do, you will realize that some of these ideas are not held exclusively by those of the playboy mentality. Sometimes Christian husbands believe them as well, to the hindrance of their marriage relationship. These faulty concepts must be corrected before a successful, fulfilling marriage for both partners can be formulated.

Myth No. 1: All women crave him. He somehow believes that he is totally irresistible, and that women idolize him.

Myth No. 2: Younger women are preferable to older women. He believes the "media myth" about youth and desirability. It never occurs to him that middle-aged people can be happily married, and that older people can be totally satisfied with one another.

Myth No. 3: Men outgrow women. The macho man has the feeling that as he be-

comes involved in his business and professional world he advances beyond his mate. He travels widely, contacts many different kinds of people, takes on bigger work responsibilities, and has a growing awareness of modern life. He feels comfortable in most social situations, while his wife may not. He has exciting friends in the business world; some of them attractive, capable, self-assured women.

Meanwhile, his wife may not have kept up with him. Busy with household chores and raising the children, she doesn't have a wide circle of acquaintances. She's concerned about the affairs of school and home—not big international or monetary issues. She hasn't grown along with her husband, but it's because she hasn't had a chance. Given the opportunity, she probably would—in every way.

Myth No. 4: Conventional ideas about love and marriage are old-fashioned. He believes the traditional concepts of a husband/wife relationship are now passe! Exciting new approaches to sexual fulfillment are much more appealing to him. The modern man thinks he could never be satisfied with a normal marriage relationship.

Myth No. 5: Marriage contracts are best. If you must get involved in a marriage, the modern man feels, make it like a business venture. Decide beforehand

who is responsible for what, and for how long. Be sure to have a termination date so you can get out if it doesn't work.

I believe that a contractual approach to marriage is arbitrary and dehumanizing. It keeps both parties from making a total commitment to one another. And it gives each an excuse to accuse the other of failure: "You didn't live up to your part of the bargain!" A true marriage relationship cannot be like a business partnership. Far too much is involved!

Myth No. 6: Progress produces family disintegration. The macho man believes that as time goes by and he accumulates more, the less happy he'll be. He and his wife will begin to "wear" on one another. As the children become more and more independent, the family gradually falls apart. The idealistic happiness of youth fades with maturity. The marriage becomes a burden.

But it doesn't have to be that way! Many families have demonstrated that in spite of financial progress, change, and the passing of years, they can remain close and strong. They continue giving one another the love and support they need.

Myth No. 7: Women are the "second" sex or "weaker" sex. Because women are not as strong physically and tend to be more demonstrative of their emotions, the macho man is inclined to categorize

them as weak or inferior. Again, this represents single-dimension, shortsighted thinking. Everyone knows that women are capable of immense strength in many areas. They are often forced to keep things together by the sheer power of their wills. And their contributions in medicine, science, research, and the industrial world are incalculable.

Myth No. 8: All unmarried women are miserable. This idea also demonstrates a tragic misunderstanding of human nature. The macho man who imagines this probably also sees himself as capable of making her happy. He never realizes that many singles—women and men—prefer to remain that way. It's a choice they deliberately made, and they are happy with it.

SOME ACTUALITIES

We've been reviewing the common misconceptions many modern men have about women. In their macho world, vain and egocentric, they convince themselves that these are not myths, but actualities. By so doing, however, they demonstrate a dismal shortsightedness about women. They also do not understand the vast potential for happiness in the conventional marriage relationship. They betray their male chauvinism.

In actuality, a husband and wife can continue growing together in a normal

relationship. The wife doesn't have automatic limits to her ability to integrate into a modern world. She can mature with her husband, giving him the support and help he needs.

Besides, the traditional marriage relationship as God designed it does offer happiness from beginning to end. True, a lot of adjustments need to be made. But they can be. The couple can be as attractive and satisfying to one another at 60 as at 20, and life can be just as exciting.

In addition, the marriage actually gets better and better. The macho man and his liberated counterpart may not think so, but it is true nevertheless. If they decide they want to, a couple can grow together, meet their needs together, laugh and cry together, and grow old happily together. True, they may lose their slim, young bodies. Perhaps they won't drive the latest car or wear the "in" fashions. But they are happy just the same. And much more in contact with reality than the man of the macho world. He is destined to search perpetually after the ultimate pleasure. And inevitably experience the disappointment and unhappiness that go with never finding it.

PART III

The Biblical Profile

8

The Genesis Factor

We have been talking pretty straight about the pressures contemporary society is bringing upon men and women today. Strong forces are at work upon both sexes to "bend" them, distorting them from God's original design. Men and women are promised that these new interpretations of the masculine/feminine roles will bring excitement and adventure into their lives. They are urged to cast aside the restrictions of traditional morals and replace them with radical, new lifestyles. The sexual revolution has reached every age level, but mostly it influences the young. The women's liberation movement continues to gain recruits

every day. The macho-man image appeals to large numbers of young males, who follow a hedonistic, ego-centered pathway. The voice of Christian feminism is being heard in our churches on a broad front.

How can dedicated Christians, men or women, maintain a balanced perspective? What's the best way to keep from being adversely affected? Are some aspects of the sexual revolution worth adopting? And if so, can a proper lifestyle be maintained?

To my way of thinking, the more familiar a person is with the Bible, the better he will be able to interpret and evaluate the trends in society today. A thorough understanding of the Scriptures is essential to the active man or woman who is aware of current thinking, and yet wants to know and follow the Lord.

This means, of course, that they must acknowledge and accept the Bible's authority. They must see it as the final answer in matters of faith and practice just as Jesus did. They will not be looking for ways to "get around" specific scriptural injunctions. Nor will they need a "new hermeneutic" to justify some radical departure from the biblical pattern. Rather, they'll accept it for what it is, God's inspired Word, and bow to it as they would to Almighty God Himself.

In this section, therefore, we will examine the Scriptures in an attempt to sketch out a clear profile of what kind of man and woman God wants us to be. We'll take a look at the classic passages that speak about equality, male-female relationships, and behavior in church and society. When we can see ourselves as God sees us, we'll be able to spot error the moment it appears.

Let's begin at the beginning, the book of Genesis. It will tell us the factors God built into us at creation. As we strive to become all He made us to be, we'll be more happy, fulfilled, and satisfied.

THE BEGINNING

The accounts of the creation of Adam and Eve are found in the first book of the Bible. We're told,

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7).

The culmination of God's creative activity came on the sixth day, the forming of man. Adam was then placed in Eden's garden and commanded to dress and till it, but prohibited from eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then the Lord God said,

It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help fit for him (Genesis 2:18).

So the Lord made Eve, as the record tells us.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:21-24).

Although this passage primarily gives us the historical account of the creation of our first parents, it also tells us much about the relationship between men and women. Let's take a closer look.

First, we learn from this account that our original parents had a physical sameness. Eve was made from a rib taken from Adam's side. He could literally say of her that she was "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Although as male and female they were different, they were one as human beings and progenitors of the race. Nothing in the creation account even hints of an intrinsic masculine superiority in nature.

Second, the unique manner of Eve's

creation preserved the unity of the race. Because she was made from Adam's rib, every human being is his descendant, including her. Adam alone came exclusively from the hand of God.

Third, from this early account we learn some important facts about marriage. It's a God-ordained institution with great potential for personal happiness. God made Eve for Adam so that the two of them could become "one flesh." Then He brought them together—the man and woman, the "help fit for him." Their unique one-flesh relationship became the pattern for all succeeding generations.

A number of basic facts about the marriage relationship are gleaned from verse 24. Let me list them for you as a background for further discussion.

1. Marriage is to be *monogamous*. One man and one woman came together in the prototype marriage. Polygamous relationships are receiving media attention today, but they were never part of God's plan. They destroy the one-man/one-woman ideal established at creation.

2. Marriage is to be *heterosexual*. A *man* and a *woman* were joined—not two men or two women. Each was suited to the other. The circle is made complete when a man and woman come together within the conventions of marriage.

3. Marriage is a *one-flesh relationship*. We observe in this verse that when a man leaves his parents and joins his wife the two become one flesh. This union has profound implications in instances of adultery, for the circle is violated and God is dishonored.

4. Marriage is to be a *permanent relationship*. When a man and woman marry, they are to stay together for a lifetime. God's ideal and intention is that the one-flesh union formed in marriage never be broken. The Lord Jesus reinforced this when He said,

For this cause shall a man leave
father and mother, and shall cleave to
his wife, and they two shall be one
flesh?

Wherefore, they are no more two,
but one flesh. What, therefore, God
hath joined together, let not man put
asunder (Matthew 19:5,6).

The creation account has basic implications for today. It tells about the original relationship between our first parents. It underscores the deep importance of the distinct sexual roles. Eve was made for Adam from his own rib, and they were brought together in a unique and special one-flesh relationship. The sacredness of that pattern has never been rescinded.

MADE TO FILL A NEED

When we read the creation account care-

fully, we learn that Eve was made to fulfill a specific need. She was not brought into the world on a whim, nor to provide man with amusement and pleasure. Woman is not to be man's gratifier; her sole purpose for living is not to inflate his masculine ego.

Rather, God made her to fill an incompleteness in Adam. The Lord saw that he needed help and companionship, so we read that He said,

It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help fit for him (Genesis 2:18).

The words traditionally rendered "help-meet" have been misinterpreted and argued about for centuries. Chauvinistic, insensitive males have long used it to force their wives into a humiliating role within the family. Women have rebelled against its implication of servanthood and inferiority.

Let us therefore look closely at what God meant when He said He would make a "help fit" for Adam. This expression is actually a translation of two Hebrew words joined together. The word "help" is from the Hebrew term *ezer*, and has the root idea of girding, surrounding, defending. In application, it usually refers to anyone who supplies much-needed help. For example, it designates an ally in war, as in 1 Kings 20, where Ben-hadad received the help of 32 kings.

Let me observe here that a person can offer help only from a position of strength. The assistance comes because one is capable of doing something the other needs. The suggestion here is of indispensable aid and support, not of humble servitude in doing menial tasks (although sometimes that may be involved).

The second Hebrew word is *keneghdo*, and has the idea of "agreeing with" or "being a counterpart." The basic concept is that of correspondence; of matching exactly. Eve therefore was made to be a helper for her husband, and as a person she corresponded to him and his needs.

Adam had the need. He is the one who was incomplete and lonely. His mate, created by the Lord God from his side, fit that need exactly. She was all that his nature demanded for his completion: physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially. The two were perfectly matched. And they came together as one flesh.

The man's need and the woman's ability to meet that need formulate the very foundation of marriage. Paul wrote,

Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man
(1 Corinthians 11:9).

Man has the need; woman's calling is to meet that need. His is the central place; hers is the supportive role. She is to be

his companion and helper. Together they were made to worship and obey the Lord, and to experience the blessings and happiness of a life in their garden paradise.

THE EFFECTS OF THE CURSE

Life in Eden must have been blissful beyond our imagination. Adam and Eve experienced all the wonders of the new creation together. They obeyed the Lord's commands to till the soil, prune the trees, dress the garden, and to be God's vice-regent over all creation. They enjoyed one another. Above all, they fellowshiped with God on a personal basis.

How wonderful if they could have stayed forever in that garden paradise! But the blessedness of life in Eden was not to last. Tragically, Adam and Eve did not resist the serpent's temptation. They violated the one prohibition the Lord placed upon them and lost their home in Eden.

It was Eve who was approached by Satan. He came to her subtly in the form of a serpent. He used lies and innuendo to break down her resistance. She had to admit, the fruit did look good. She wanted to be as God. She was sure she would not die. So she ate, her husband ate too, and they fell from innocence. Now they were hiding from the One with whom they had experienced such deep communion. And when they final-

ly stood before Him, He pronounced curses upon Adam, Eve, and the serpent. To Adam, God said,

Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Genesis 3:17-19).

The man would now live in hardship and toil. He would fight thistles and thorns as he tilled the soil by the sweat of his brow to provide for himself and his family. And he would die, returning to the dust from which he had been made. Now he would need the help of the one suited to him more than ever before!

The curse upon Eve for her disobedience was of a different sort.

Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee (Genesis 3:16).

Several important factors need to be noted in the curse upon Eve. They help us understand some of the underlying causes for the feminine revolt, and hint at the reasons some women would deny their sexuality.

First, God told Eve that He would multiply her sorrow and conception. Then He added, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." Remember, Adam and Eve were given the command to be fruitful and multiply *before* their fall into sin. Having children was no doubt intended to be a blessing to them. It would be easy, and it would multiply their joy as they lived together in Eden's paradise. As a consequence of their disobedience, however, childbearing would occur with great discomfort and travail. Women may trace its painful qualities to the curse of God after the fall.

As seen earlier, modern technology has found ways for women to minimize the difficulties of childbirth or to avoid it altogether, while still being the biological mother. Many women would gladly escape the unpleasantness of pregnancy, labor, and delivery if they could. Yet it is part of the curse. Efforts to free oneself from it are denials of the natural consequences of the original sin in Eden.

The second important factor to be noted relating to the curse upon the woman is expressed in the Lord's words,

“... thy desire shall be to thy husband.” Because of her sin, Eve would have a deep attraction to her husband, and so has every wife since her.

Some Bible commentators have noted that it is a strong desire indeed—a powerful craving of the woman for her mate. She longs for him to the point that she remains loyal even though she may suffer greatly as his wife. Every pastor and marriage counselor can tell of women who have stayed with their husbands and continued to love them deeply in spite of having to endure a miserable existence.

Perhaps one reason God placed this desire in women was to compensate for the miseries of childbearing. Because of the discomforts of pregnancy and pain of childbirth, a woman may solemnly declare that she'll never have another child. But when her infant is born, she returns to her husband. She has a deep God-given inner yearning for her man—an attraction she cannot erase.

A third factor in God's curse upon woman is found in the words, “and he shall rule over thee” (v. 16). God here declared to Eve that Adam would have authority over her. Now, Adam already had authority over her; the fact that she was made to be his helper establishes that point. So does Paul's statement, “Neither was the man created for the woman, but

the woman for the man" (1 Corinthians 11:9). But now that the fall had occurred, and with it the chaos brought into the world by sin, a hierarchy of authority was even more important than ever! Therefore, the woman's independence upon the man for leadership increased at the fall. Again, this does not imply inherent inferiority.

Some recent authors have been saying that the effects of the third factor of the curse, woman's desire for her husband, are removed at salvation. In redemption, they claim, the man's authority over his wife is canceled out. The woman is then free from this desire and this aspect of the curse is removed. Today's woman, it seems, is trying to escape every element of the curse that she can.

But this interpretation (perhaps it's part of the "new hermeneutic") is wrong for at least two reasons. First, the principle of male headship and female submission was established *before the fall*. It was in effect *before* sin entered the world, before the curse was pronounced against Eve. The principle was only intensified by the condition that her desire would be to her husband.

A second reason this interpretation is not valid is that none of the other effects of the curse are removed when a person is saved. The Christian man's field, for example, is just as full of rocks as his un-

believing neighbor. He battles just as many weeds and thistles. And the Christian woman's pregnancy is every bit as difficult and her labor and delivery as painful as her non-Christian counterpart. The desire of the saved wife for her husband is therefore no more nor less than that of the unbeliever. The claim that salvation cancels out a woman's desire for her husband, and her responsibility to submit to his authority is therefore in error.

A PROMISE TO EVE

One final statement in the Genesis account needs examination. The serpent was caused to crawl on the ground and to be cursed above all other animals (Genesis 3:14). Then the Lord said to Satan,

And I will put enmity between thee
and the woman, and between thy seed
and her seed; He shall bruise thy head,
and thou shalt bruise His heel
(Genesis 3:15).

Because of Eve's sin, and that of her husband, the whole human race was affected. Their wrong choice caused every one of Adam's descendants to be born in sin. But from God came this blessed promise: The Seed of woman would crush the serpent's head, though His heel would be wounded in the process.

This prophecy referred to Jesus Christ, the One "born of a woman." He

entered the human race through Mary, a virgin, and lived the obedient life that Adam and Eve did not live. Satan's most powerful temptations did not make Him fall. Then, when His "hour was come," Christ surrendered to false accusations, an illegal trial, and a shameful death by crucifixion. Truly, His "heel" was wounded. Yet He crushed the enemy's head. For there on the cross, and by His resurrection from the dead, He defeated Satan and purchased our redemption.

Yes, the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 has come to pass. The "seed of woman" crushed the head of Satan, that fallen angel. Because of Christ's sacrificial death as the "second Adam," all who believe on Him can be free from sin and its awful curse. The potential for victory over sin belongs to every child of God.

Pregnancy, labor, childbirth are difficult times for the woman indeed, and made even more so by the curse. It was through this process that the Son of God was born into our world. His young Jewish mother did not escape any of the consequences of the fall, yet she brought into the world the Savior of mankind. And He in turn, as the last Adam, made right Eden's wrong.

SUMMARY

Much is to be learned by a return to the beginning. In the creation account we

find that the struggles and trials of women had their origin in the first woman. Her disobedience, and that of her husband, brought upon her some of the factors contemporary women fight so hard to erase. Yet travail in childbirth, a longing for her husband, and her submission to his authority were decreed by God Himself. They do not have their origin in a male-dominated past. Nor were they perpetuated by chauvinist, ego-centered men to keep her "in her place."

Therefore, she must accept them as coming from God and part of her lot. The sooner she does, the sooner she'll begin to see marriage as a wonderful relationship with great potential for personal, fulfilling happiness. And this will help her grow to become the contented woman at peace with herself and her world that God wants her to be.

9

Dimensions of Biblical Equality

Equal Rights!

Equal Pay!

Equal Opportunity!

Equal Responsibility!

These and the other popular phrases of the feminist movement leave no doubt that the basic issue in the efforts of the liberationists is *equality*. The focal point of their campaign is the removal of those barriers and restrictions—be they tradition, stereotyped thinking, company policy, or whatever—that limit women from being accepted as equals in all aspects of modern society.

No one would deny that the feminists have a point. For far too long, unreasonable, and chauvinistic limitations have

been placed upon women. They have been kept from reaching certain professional and employment goals. They have been hindered in breaking free from the old adage, "A woman's place is in the home." They have chafed under suggestions of inferiority that have come from a multiplicity of sources.

The thinking Christian woman today wants to know what the Bible says about male/female equality. She has the feeling that inequities do exist. She wants to be free to become all God intended her to be in the home, church, and society. Yet she doesn't want to go one step further than the Bible allows.

In this chapter we will look closely at the dimensions of biblical equality. We will consult God's Word to determine those areas where men and women are equal, and to discover if it does indeed place restrictions upon anyone. The study will be beneficial, however, only if there is a willingness to acknowledge the authority of God's Word and submit to it.

EQUAL IN CREATION

As we observed in the preceding chapter, the man was created before the woman. Each creative day the Lord looked upon what He had done and pronounced that it was good. But shortly after He made Adam, He said, "It is not good that the

man should be alone." So God formed Eve from a rib taken out of Adam's side, and they became our first parents.

The woman was brought into being to give help to the man. As Adam's compatible companion, she would join him in his work and take away his loneliness. Together they would share in the labors and blessings of their garden paradise.

Even though Eve was created for Adam, in God's sight she was equal to him as a person. He was not superior, nor was she inferior. She shared with him all the rank and privileges of personhood. As human beings, they were co-equal.

This is because she, like Adam, was made in the image of God. The book of Genesis tells us,

And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them (Genesis 1:26,27).

When this passage tells us that Adam and Eve were made in God's image, what does it mean? We know it does *not* mean that our first parents looked like God, for John 4:24 tells us that God is spirit.

Therefore, He does not have a body. Consequently, we could not be similar to Him in appearance.

The biblical statement that we are made in the image of God means that we are like Him in moral, spiritual, and intellectual qualities. As persons, we are different from the animals. We have individual identity, we are immortal, and we share a moral nature.

Please note: these are not just *masculine* characteristics. Men and women equally share these qualities. They do not depend upon one another for them. As the first woman came from God's creative hand, she was equal to the man, possessing the same attributes. She had her own identity apart from her husband. Although Eve was made from Adam's side, she was a distinct person in her own right.

Those who say that the woman finds her identity only in the man are therefore in error. Eve had a distinct personhood. Like Adam, she had great dignity and worth in the sight of her Creator. And the same is true of every woman who has lived since then.

The woman also has immortality. Like Adam, Eve was created to live forever. Like him, she has everlasting existence. Neither the woman nor the man are merely the "highest animals on the evolutionary ladder." Both are unique in

God's creation, and both have an immortal soul.

Like Adam, Eve was given a moral nature. Both she and her husband had the power to choose between right and wrong. Both were placed equally under probation in the garden of Eden. It seems that Adam was instructed not to partake of the forbidden tree before Eve's creation, but the prohibition applied to her as well, probably passed on to her by Adam. We know this because when Eve was confronted by the serpent, she said,

We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die

(Genesis 3:2,3).

Yes, like Adam, Eve was a moral being. She shared with her husband the responsibility to obey the Lord's command, and she faced with him the consequences of disobedience.

Woman was therefore equal to man in creation. Eve had distinct personhood, immortality, and moral responsibility—just like her husband. Both were made in God's image, and neither was superior to the other. There is no inequality in creation.

EQUAL IN SALVATION

The woman is also equal to the man in the benefits of salvation. When writing to the Christians at Galatia, the apostle Paul said,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

This verse declares unequivocally that men and women share alike the blessings of the new birth. As there are no racial or social distinctions in salvation, there are no sexual distinctions. All who trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior experience the same forgiveness, the same removal of guilt, and the same gift of new life. They all become one in Him. They are welcomed on equal status into His family. They have the same rights before God and can claim the same spiritual realities.

In Paul's day, this statement of male/female equality was revolutionary! It is difficult for us today to realize what it was like for women in New Testament times. Although the Greek and Roman worlds had given them some rights and privileges denied them by other cultures, they were not accepted on a par with men. In some aspects, Greek and Roman women resembled slaves. A daughter, for example, was considered her father's property. She had to accept whatever ar-

rangements he made for her marriage.

Women could not own land or take people to court. And women were usually found in the home. They seldom appeared in public, and then only in the strictest modesty. Even the Jews, who generally had a higher view of life than either the Greeks or the Romans, looked upon women as inferior.

We can readily see, therefore, why Paul's statement that there is "neither male nor female" in salvation was startling. And it has had a profound effect upon the status of women. As the principle was put into practice in the early church, it influenced pagan cultures. The place of women in general society was elevated. In spite of claims to the contrary, the spread of Christianity has always raised the status of women. They have equal standing with the man in Christ, sharing with him in all of the blessings of redemption.

The Bible gives absolutely no indication that a woman's salvation is dependent upon her husband's. Nor does it even vaguely imply that she must approach God exclusively through him. Neither does it make him morally accountable for her iniquities. They are equal before God. Although the man was granted the position of authority in the church and home, this in no way implies his superiority to the woman.

Peter substantiated Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28 when he wrote,

In like manner, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

Think about what Peter said. Husbands were to treat their wives as "heirs together of the grace of life." That's true spiritual equality! The full enjoyment of the blessings of salvation are shared equally. No one takes a back seat in partaking of the benefits of the gift of eternal life that come through faith in Jesus Christ.

Some Christian feminists use 1 Peter 3:7 to support their claim that God through the Lord Jesus Christ has abolished the principle of male authority/female submission. They refer to this verse as the "Magna Charta of humanity" in their writings. They interpret it as totally removing any of the differences between men and women in nature and responsibility.

Many of these feminists claim that Paul was actually contradictory in what he said about female equality. They say he reached a high point in Galatians 3:28, but that he slipped back into his chauvinistic rabbinical background in those passages about women being silent

in church or being in subjection to their husbands. They bemoan the fact that all of his epistles do not show the flash of foresight he demonstrated when writing to the Galatians.

But the viewpoint of these outspoken critics is unfounded! Paul was not the theological schizophrenic they accuse him of being. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit guarantees that all Scripture is true, and that it is consistent throughout. It applies to Paul's passages about women's behavior as well as their equality in salvation. Galatians 3:28 does not cancel out the principle of masculine authority/feminine responsibility that is taught throughout Scripture. Those God-given regulations remain. But the verse does proclaim this to the whole world: all who believe in the Lord Jesus, bond or free, Jew or Gentile, man or woman, are equal in salvation.

Frankly, my conviction is that some of the Christian feminists who disagree with the order God has established are actually approaching the Scriptures backward. Having already decided what they believe, they then make the Bible fit into it. They have accepted current popular thinking, and are trying to accommodate the Scriptures to it. This approach to God's Word, of course, is not valid. Using this method, we could make the Bible say whatever we want. Our re-

sponsibility is to submit to the authority of God's Word and to accept it for what it says—even though we may not like its conclusions.

EQUAL IN ACCOUNTABILITY

A third dimension of equality between man and woman taught in the Bible is that they share the same responsibility to obey the Lord. They are held equally accountable to do His will, and they both are either rewarded or suffer the consequences of His judgment for the moral choices they make.

Remember, both Adam and Eve were judged by God for violating His command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The woman would endure pain and travail in childbearing, and her deep yearning would be toward her husband. The man would have to toil long hours to provide for his family's needs. Both Adam and Eve experienced spiritual death the moment they ate of the forbidden fruit, and eventually they died physically as well for their disobedience. Eve was not spared just because she was a woman, nor was Adam protected because he was a man. And they needed equally the grace-provision of God to escape the punishment and agony of eternal death.

Man and woman are still equally accountable before the Lord. Neither can

honestly use the other as an excuse for their own evil behavior. Equal privilege produces equal responsibility. The two go hand in hand. The rich blessing that comes from a life of obedience to God's will is available to both sexes. But so is a day of reckoning for all who choose to walk in the way of the world and live in selfish disobedience.

In addition, the commands of Scripture regarding morality apply to men and women equally. The standards of behavior set down by the Lord are for everyone. No one, regardless of race, position, or sex, is exempt. All are equal in what God expects. And the rewards or punishments that are meted out by the Lord for the choices made on the earth will be equal as well.

To summarize, the accusation that the Bible teaches spiritual inequality is totally unfounded. They are *equal in creation*, made in the image of God. Both have distinct personhood, the gift of immortality, and a moral consciousness. They are *equal in salvation*, and share alike in cleansing, forgiveness, and new life. And they are *equal in accountability*. They will face the same judgment for disobedience and receive the same rewards for faithful submission to God's will. Yes, men and women are spiritual equals!

10

True Liberation

The purpose of this book has been to discuss the forces in society, both inside and outside Christendom, that are distorting the masculine and feminine roles set forth in the Bible. We've talked about the preoccupation with the *self*, changes in the work force, the call for self-dependence, and the liberating effect of advances in medical science. In one way or another, each of these factors is a source of pressure on today's woman—and the man.

We have also observed that the primary issue is *equality*. Women want to be liberated from their traditional role in the family and society. They are struggling to break free from the stereotypes so that they can develop their full potential and become their own persons. The feminists are therefore working hard to

remove any barrier that might keep a woman from becoming whatever she wants to be.

All of this places the sincere Christian woman in a dilemma. She wants to honor God by the way she lives, yet she also wants to live up to the potential God has placed in her. She feels that she has been held back from discovering and using her gifts, yet she doesn't want to overstep the boundaries of God's will. She wants to be free to explore every possibility her world offers, yet she's painfully aware of the strictures of tradition—especially within the church. What is she to do?

LIBERATION IN LIMITATION

I believe that liberation, fulfillment, challenge, and full happiness are available to every Christian woman. To find them, however, she must diligently study what God's Word tells her to be, and then be willing to accept its authority.

After all, God made the woman. When He fashioned her from Adam's rib, He exactly suited her for the role He designed for her. As the Holy Spirit inspired those persons who authored the various books of the Bible, He directed them to write down the principles and specific commands that would lead her to the highest plane of happiness in a fallen world.

Therefore, the truly liberated, happy person—man or woman—is the one who accepts the Word of God as authoritative and puts it into practice the best way he can in his own life. True, it will bring limitations. It will set up barriers. It will draw some narrow boundary lines. But it also offers unlimited potential. It sounds trite, I know, but “God’s way is best.”

MALE/FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

The most crucial issue confronting the Christian woman today is her relationship to the man. After all, it’s from the man that the feminist struggles to be liberated. And it’s with him that she wants to be equal. But she needs to study and apply the specific guidelines of God’s Word.

The principle governing the relationship between men and women is stated in this verse:

But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Please note that in the line of authority established here, the man is the head of the woman. The text says,

The head of Christ is God.

The head of man is Christ.

The head of woman is man.

In the structure set forth here, the au-

thority is in *function*—not in *quality*. No suggestion is given that the one granted responsibility is superior or has a higher moral nature. If that were so, when Paul said that God is the head of Christ, he would have been implying an inferiority in the Son. That cannot be, for both Father and Son are equally and fully God.

The verse therefore suggests authority without implying superiority. It's a *functional* authority, which is in turn a successful means for the ordering of human affairs. As man must submit to Christ's authority, so woman must subject herself to man. Then the business of life runs smoothly.

Some current writers object to this interpretation. They claim that the Greek word *kephale*, translated "head" in 1 Corinthians 11:3, does not suggest authority. They maintain that it carries the idea of "originator," "source," or "enabler." This rendering may apply in some passages, but not in the verse before us, because that would raise questions about the relationship between the Father and the Son. Since Jesus Christ is fully God, He is an equal member of the trinity. God could not be His "source" or "originator," for that would imply an Arian concept of the trinity.

No, the word "head" in the phrase "the head of the woman is the man" does not

mean "exalted originator" in its primary sense. Rather, it speaks of leadership, of the one in authority. In most of its occurrences in the New Testament, the word *kephale* means the physical head of an animal or person. In the seven New Testament passages where it is not used for the physical head, this word always refers to leadership and authority. But it does not imply superiority in nature. Usually it portrays Christ's headship over the church (see Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:19; Ephesians 4:15).

Christian feminists refuse to accept the hierarchy of authority given in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Although Bible scholars agree that the authority here is *functional*, an establishing of accountability for the purpose of smooth operation, the feminists disagree. They quote Galatians 3:28 as their proof. But the fact remains that in the man/woman relationship the divine pattern is for the male to make the final decisions. And when it is followed, it's better for everyone. After all, God made us. He knows what's best for us. He wouldn't give a directive that would produce strife and unhappiness.

GOD'S PURPOSE

God's pattern of masculine authority/feminine submission is stated in 1 Corinthians 11:3, but we have a right to ask the reason for it. The Bible answers that

in two passages. We'll look first at a section of 1 Corinthians 11:

For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.

Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man (1 Corinthians 11:8,9).

Two reasons are given here for the masculine authority/feminine submission principle. Number one is that the woman was made from the man. Eve came from Adam, not Adam from Eve. She was formed from a rib taken out of his side. Therefore, she is to recognize his authority.

Reason number two is that the woman was made for the man. The Lord had said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). He made the woman to be his companion and helper. She was created to meet man's need, (yet at the same time, he would also meet her needs).

The second Scripture passage giving God's purpose for the headship/submission principle is in these verses from Paul's first letter to Timothy:

But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the

transgression (1 Timothy 2:12-14).

Primarily talking about woman's role in the church, Paul again gave two reasons for her subjection to the authority of the man. One is that the man was created first (v. 13). As the original human being, the man was given the leadership position.

The other is stated in the words, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman." It was Eve who stood before the forbidden tree. It was Eve who listened to Satan's deceptive words. It was Eve who succumbed to temptation, reached forth her hand and ate the forbidden fruit. Even though Adam also disobeyed God, he was not trapped by the deception. Eve was. So the man was given authority.

These are not the inventions of self-protective male chauvinists; they are statements from the Word of God. They are not judgmental, but matters of fact. They do not suggest male superiority, but the establishment of order for the purpose of a smooth, trouble-free life. And obeying them brings the kind of happiness God wants us to have.

THE MARITAL PATTERN

The most important application of the authority/submission principle is within the marriage. The pattern is clearly drawn in Ephesians 5, where the model

for the husband-wife relationship is that of Christ and the church. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote,

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body.

Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything

(Ephesians 5:22-24).

No one would dispute the authority of Christ over the church. No one would argue the point that it must submit to His leadership. All would agree that the pastor or board members who are determined to do what they want regardless of what the Bible says are in error, and that their church is headed for trouble. As the church is to be in submission to the Lord Jesus, so the woman is to accept her husband's final authority. She is to acknowledge and follow his leadership. This is not to say that he is to be a god to her—far from it! But he is given the burden of authority.

What God expects of husbands is also spelled out in Ephesians and again, Christ is the example.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25).

The husband's responsibility to his wife is that he must love her as Christ loved the church. This involves *sacrifice*, for Christ "gave Himself for it." It involves *unselfishness*, and it involves a *spiritual purpose*, for Christ's sacrifice for the church was "that He might cleanse it."

My conviction is this: If the husband follows the pattern established here, loving his wife sacrificially and unselfishly, he makes it easy for her to submit to his authority. She will find joy and fulfillment in accepting her God-given role, just as the church finds joy in following the Savior's lead. The submissive wife need *not* feel miserable and restricted; she is free to become all God intended her to be as a mature, godly, happy woman.

Conversely, the man who is married to a woman who accepts his authority will love her deeply. Recognizing her earnest desire to obey God and be his suitable helper, he will grow in devotion to her and in respect for her. Together they'll work out the problems that come from their differences in personality. And whatever troubling factors may enter their lives, they'll keep as their goal the building of a happy, Christ-honoring home.

A WORD TO HUSBANDS

Before going on, let me comment briefly

about what the authority/submission principle does *not* mean. Male headship does not imply that the husband is always right, nor that the wife's opinion does not count. Nor does it mean that the man has license to "lord it over" his wife, dictating her every move. Her wishes and desires for the marriage are just as important as his.

I recently read of a marriage where the woman had to ask her husband's permission whenever she wanted to contribute to a conversation. Upon inquiry, it was learned that the man felt that the Ephesians 5:23 passage was to be applied literally in every situation. How tragic!

The male authority/female subjection principle does *not* mean that the husband should so dominate his wife that she loses all individuality. She is not to subject her personality totally to his. Nor does it mean, as some have taught, that she must obey his every order. Although she is responsible to accept his God-given role as head, she nevertheless has a higher responsibility to the Lord. Her husband is not her priest. Her salvation does not come through him, but through Christ who died for all. She is her husband's equal in salvation and personal accountability.

If a man orders his Christian wife to do something that is morally wrong, she is to quietly but firmly refuse to do it.

She must not become partner, for example, in a scheme to defraud a business associate or the Internal Revenue Service. She must not assist her husband in a theft or any other immoral practice.

The Bible gives a clear precedent in this matter. It commands us to obey those who have rule over us in government. But if the authorities order us to do something in violation of God's specific commands, we are to refuse. When the leaders of Jerusalem ordered Peter and John to stop teaching in the name of Christ, they replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Likewise, if the wife is told by her husband to break God's moral law, she must refuse. Her first allegiance is to the Lord.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD

The marital situation is most difficult when the husband is overbearing and domineering. Perhaps he's not a Christian and the wife is. She has to put up with his abusive talk, language that mocks the God she loves, and occasional bouts of drunkenness. She is humiliated because they are always in debt and the house is in bad repair. The children suffer verbal abuse and are learning the immoral values of the world from their father. And she's tired, because she's been holding the family together.

What is this Christian wife supposed to do? Should she follow the lead of her liberated counterparts and dump the guy? Should she take him for all she can get and let him drink himself to death? Should she get the children out of there before their lives are ruined?

According to the Bible, she has the solemn obligation to give that marriage every chance to succeed. She's not to mock or despise her husband. She's not to scream back at him as loudly as he screams at her. Peter said,

In the same manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the behavior of the wives,

Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel,

But let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Peter 3:1,3,4).

Peter was not talking about jewelry and fashion. He was speaking about a Christian woman married to an unbeliever, saying that her godly behavior can win him. She is to display a beauty of spirit, an ornamentation of the heart that has great value in God's sight. As she walks

closely with the Lord, submitting to her unsaved husband whenever she can, she may be used to win him. To my way of thinking, the wife who is willing to obey 1 Peter 3:1-4 is indeed the most beautiful woman in the world.

The fact that the man is not a Christian is not in itself a reason for divorce. The believing wife is to remain loyal and faithful to him. Her most attractive feature is to be her beauty of soul. Only the most insensitive, depraved lot of a man could fail to be won by a woman like that!

THE LIBERATED WOMAN

The apostle Paul set forth a profile for what I believe to be a truly liberated woman. It's found in his letter to Titus, when he exhorted,

The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things,

That they may teach the young women to be sober-minded, to love their husbands, to love their children,

To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:3-5).

The older, more experienced women were to instruct the younger to develop these qualities: to be serious and sensi-

ble, to love their husbands and children, to be discreet, chaste, good women, and to obey their husbands. The Christian wife will place the needs and interests of her husband and children above her own. The center of her devotion will be within the family circle—a commendable virtue in any age.

The older women were also told to instruct the younger wives to be “keepers at home.” I know that doesn’t sound very exciting. But let me explain that this involves much more than washing clothes, cleaning the floors, and doing the cooking. The wife is to be a wise and efficient home manager, diligently overseeing the affairs of the household. She is to use her creative energies to manage the home successfully. This may involve overseeing the family finances. It may include going to work so she can supplement the household income. It certainly includes attending to the needs of her small children. Her skills and gifts are to be used to help the family achieve goals.

Solomon described just such a wife in the book of Proverbs. As you read the passage, note the things this woman did.

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.

She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she

planteth a vineyard.

She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

Strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates

(Proverbs 31:10,14,16,24-26,28, 31).

The woman described here lived an exciting, challenging, fulfilling, and I might add, liberated life. She was free to develop her skills and use her talents to the best interests of her marriage. The woman today who follows her example, efficiently overseeing the household and meeting her family's needs, will experience that same rewarding, fulfilling life. And her husband, if he is any kind of man at all, will respond with genuine appreciation and a deepening love. He won't take advantage of her, but will show her the respect and admiration she deserves. And as they work out the details of their relationship together, each willing to adjust to the personality of the other and determined to do God's

will, they will have a God-honoring, happy, exemplary home.

A CLOSING WORD

We began this book with the premise that the man and woman who accept and live by the biblical profiles for their behavior cannot help but find happiness. A walk with God produces genuine freedom and opens the door to self-fulfillment. The male headship/female submission principle, when properly applied, does not prohibit the man or the woman from becoming all God intended them to be.

We have discussed some of the "gender benders" at work in contemporary society which are distorting the true biblical roles. We noted the disappointment and dissatisfaction that comes from living only for self. We saw that complete self-dependency is not the answer. We looked at the women's liberation movement, the extremes of Christian feminism, and the total-woman caricature. We also discussed the macho-man myth.

Then we set forth the profile for men and women established in Scripture. We emphasized the authority of the Bible. Because it is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, it has the right to tell us how to live. Yet, as we submit to it, we are totally free to develop in the right sense all

the potential God put into us when He created us. This in turn produces the highest form of self-fulfillment and brings us genuine and lasting happiness.

Have you been wrestling with God? Have you been fighting against His authority and His will? As a woman, have you been reluctant to accept your God-ordained role? As a man, have you been insensitive and domineering?

I urge you to read God's Word again and again. Accept its authority. Obey it. Then, man or woman, you'll begin to experience the freedom and fulfillment of walking the pathway God has marked out for you.

The Gender Benders

Rapid changes are taking place in our society as we move toward the beginning of the twenty-first century. Most profoundly affected are women, but men are being influenced as well. Powerful forces are "bending" people of both genders, distorting the biblical roles for women and men. This book analyzes some of these trends, discussing such issues as:

- The cult of the self
- Macho men and self-sufficient women
- The sexual revolution
- Christian feminism
- The women's liberation movement

The final authority for determining masculine and feminine roles in any society is the Bible. The profile it outlines for the way men and women should live coincides with the way God made them. Therefore, the biblical pattern for all relationships provides true freedom, personal fulfillment, and lasting happiness. And the person who follows it will resist the seductive forces of our self-worshipping age.

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